AFTER THE BATTLE

SALERNO

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Front Cover: The Anglo-American landing at Salerno, 40 miles south-east of Naples, took place in September 1943 as part of the initial Allied move to liberate Italy. Almost nothing remains to be seen of the aftermath of the battle in the town today, this comparison being taken on the Via Roma as a Sherman of the 40th Royal Tank Regiment drives westward through Salerno. (Karel Margry)

Centre Pages: The 28cm turrets from the German battleship *Gneisenau*, installed ashore near Copenhagen in Denmark after the ship was bombed in 1942, remain in full working order, a public demonstration of their fire-power being held at Stevensfort in June 1996. (Peter Schenk)

Back Cover: Sigrid Hansen of the Harstad Tourist Office revels in her unofficial title of 'Miss 40.6cm' for obvious reasons! The perfectly-preserved 16-inch naval gun battery remains one of the most outstanding legacies of the German occupation of Norway. (Sigrid Hansen)

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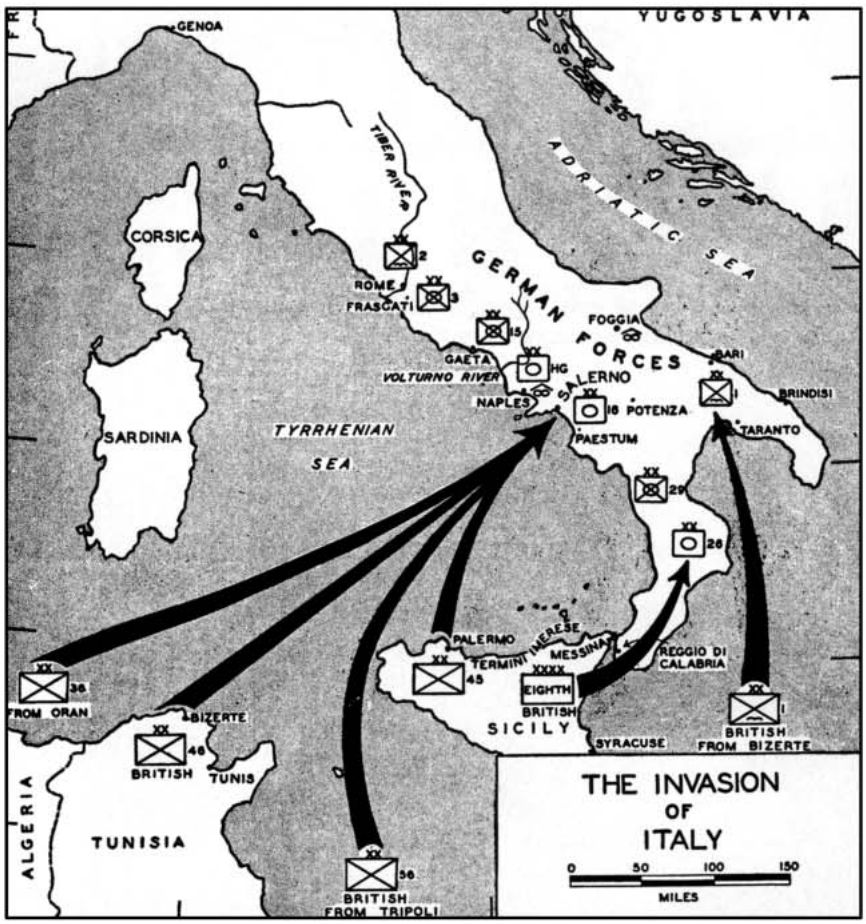


In early September 1943, after the conquest of Sicily and the fall of Mussolini (see *After the Battle* No. 77), the Allied armies invaded southern Italy, thus for the first time striking at the heart of a major Axis nation and breaching Hitler's 'Fortress Europe'. First, on September 3, the British Eighth Army crossed the Strait of Messina to the Italian mainland to start an advance up the Calabrian peninsula (Operation 'Baytown'); then, on September 9, two operations took place: British 1st Airborne Division carried out a subsidiary landing at Taranto (Operation 'Slapstick'); and the US Fifth Army carried out a major landing on beaches 40 miles south-east of Naples in the Gulf of Salerno (Operation 'Avalanche'). As the map shows, Fifth Army's forces came from widely-separate bases, embarking from Oran, Algiers, Bizerte, and Tripoli in North-Africa and Palermo and Termini in Sicily.

American GIs aboard a troop transport cheer the news of Italy's surrender. At 6.30 p.m. on September 8, Eisenhower broadcast the news of Italy's defection to the troops on the invasion fleet bound for Salerno. Dictated by political considerations, the timing of this announcement was unfortunate: the immediate reaction was one of relief and joy, the troops now expecting an easy landing. Although senior officers were quick to remind their troops that they would still meet opposition from the Germans, thoughts of a painless landing dulled the fighting edge of many men.

The Salerno landings were designed to secure a firm base for future operations in Italy, its first aims being to cut off the German forces fighting in southern Italy, to capture the port and airfields of Naples, and to reach the line of the Volturno river. The Gulf of Salerno was chosen because it was within reach of Allied air support based in Sicily and offered the most favourable conditions for landing: little surf, an offshore gradient which would permit landing craft to come close to shore, good beach exits, and a good road net close behind the dunes. However, a serious drawback of Salerno was that the narrow crescent-shaped plain, which stretches 26 miles from Salerno in the north to Agropoli in the south, was fenced off by a great arc of mountains, rising like a steep wall from the plain. It was imperative that these mountains be captured quickly for not only would they have to be crossed in order to get to Naples but, if left in the hands of the enemy, they would offer him a position from which he could observe and completely dominate the beach-head. This is the Gulf of Salerno as seen from the north. The railway curving into Salerno town is the main line from the toe of Italy to Naples. (USNA)

SALERNO

By Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, Commanding General, US Fifth Army

The Tyrrhenian Sea, rolling softly against the sun-browned shores of Italy, is generally regarded as one of the loveliest sights in the world, and, for all I know, it may be exactly that. When first I saw it, late on the afternoon of September 8, 1943, it was merely the meeting place for 450 ships of all sizes and shapes, and my only immediate reaction was, 'Thank God, I haven't got the job of getting them assembled and in to shore.'

That was the task of Vice Admiral Henry Kent Hewitt, USN, the commander of the Western Naval Task Force, from whose flagship USS *Ancon* I watched the arrival at our rendezvous of the American and British forces that were to make the first assault against Hitler's 'impregnable' Fortress Europe by landing at Salerno Bay, south of Naples. It is true that the British Eighth Army under General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery was already on Italian soil, 150 miles to the south, having hopped the three miles from Sicily to the toe of the Italian boot, but the enemy had opposed them only with delaying tactics. The German supreme commander in Italy, Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring, chose to make the assault by the US Fifth Army — which threatened the great port of Naples — the real test of strength in a struggle that would demonstrate to the world the power of Germany on the European continent.

We had been for three days in the capable hands of the American and British naval forces, which transported the Fifth Army from Oran, Algiers, Palermo, Bizerta, and Tripoli to the assembly area off Salerno. They had been quiet days for me, because in that brief period the conduct of the invasion was out of my hands. Until we reached the beaches, there was nothing I could do except take a last look at what we were up against. Despite the Italian armistice arrangements [concluded on September 3 and broadcast to the invasion troops on September 8], there were many discouraging factors.

There was no question in our minds that the Germans would try to react strongly, and that there was plenty of enemy strength regardless of the Italian action. There were about eight Nazi divisions available to meet an attack in Italy, and we knew that some of their strongest forces were in the south. The 16. Panzer-Division was in the Eboli–Battipaglia area, adjacent to Salerno; when the Nazis got wind of the Italian armistice negotiations, this division was ordered to assume defence of the entire coastal area where we were planning to land. We discovered later that artillery, tanks, and mortars were assembled in a semicircle covering the coast, and a concentration of heavy anti-aircraft guns was stationed at Salerno and near Battipaglia. Mines were laid on the beaches, barbed-wire obstacles were erected, and many machine guns were aimed to cover the best landing spots. In addition, the Panzer-Division 'Hermann Göring' was near Naples and the armoured infantry of the 15. Panzergrenadier-Division was close by in the neighbourhood of Gaeta. Other units were waiting near Rome to determine where we would land.

Furthermore, we knew that in command of these forces was Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring, one of the ablest officers in the Hitler armies. He had served with distinction in the German artillery and in the Luftwaffe, and had been on the General Staff prior to the war. Kesselring was well qualified both as a commander and an administrator, and he conducted the Axis operations in Italy with great skill for two years. He was quick to reorganise his forces and shift reserves to meet our attacks and he had the advantage of a homogeneous army in which he could move large or small units without restriction, in contrast to the Allied difficulties in handling men and equipment of many different nationalities.

Left: **The commander of Fifth Army, whose personal account of the Salerno landings we have taken as the text for our story, was Lieutenant General Mark Wayne Clark. Born May 1, 1896, Clark had graduated from West Point in 1917 and served overseas as a battalion commander in World War I. He had first achieved prominence in May 1942 when he became chief-of-staff of US Army Ground Forces. In June 1942, he was sent to Britain to begin building up US II Corps there. In August 1942, he became deputy to General Eisenhower, when the latter was commander-in-chief of Allied Forces Headquarters (AFHQ). In that capacity, Clark executed a delicate political assignment in connection with Operation 'Torch', the Allied invasion of North Africa, including a daring submarine trip to Algeria in October for secret negotiations with Vichy-French officers, in an effort to persuade them to join the Allies. He was appointed commander of Fifth Army in January 1943 to plan and execute the Allied invasion of the Italian mainland. After Salerno, he was to lead the Fifth Army through the bitter battles of Cassino and Anzio, and accomplish his personal dream of leading his victorious army into Rome. In December 1944, he succeeded Alexander as commander of 15th Army Group when the latter became Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean. Salerno was Clark's first combat experience as a high commander (most of his career had consisted of staff assignments as an instructor and trainer of troops). His generalship, both in this battle and in the later drawn-out struggles at Cassino and Anzio, has generated much debate and controversy. Clark was a strong personality, openly ambitious, and determined to find glory as a commander. This sometimes led him to disobey orders from his superior Alexander or to make decisions which were more personally motivated than military sound. (USNA)**

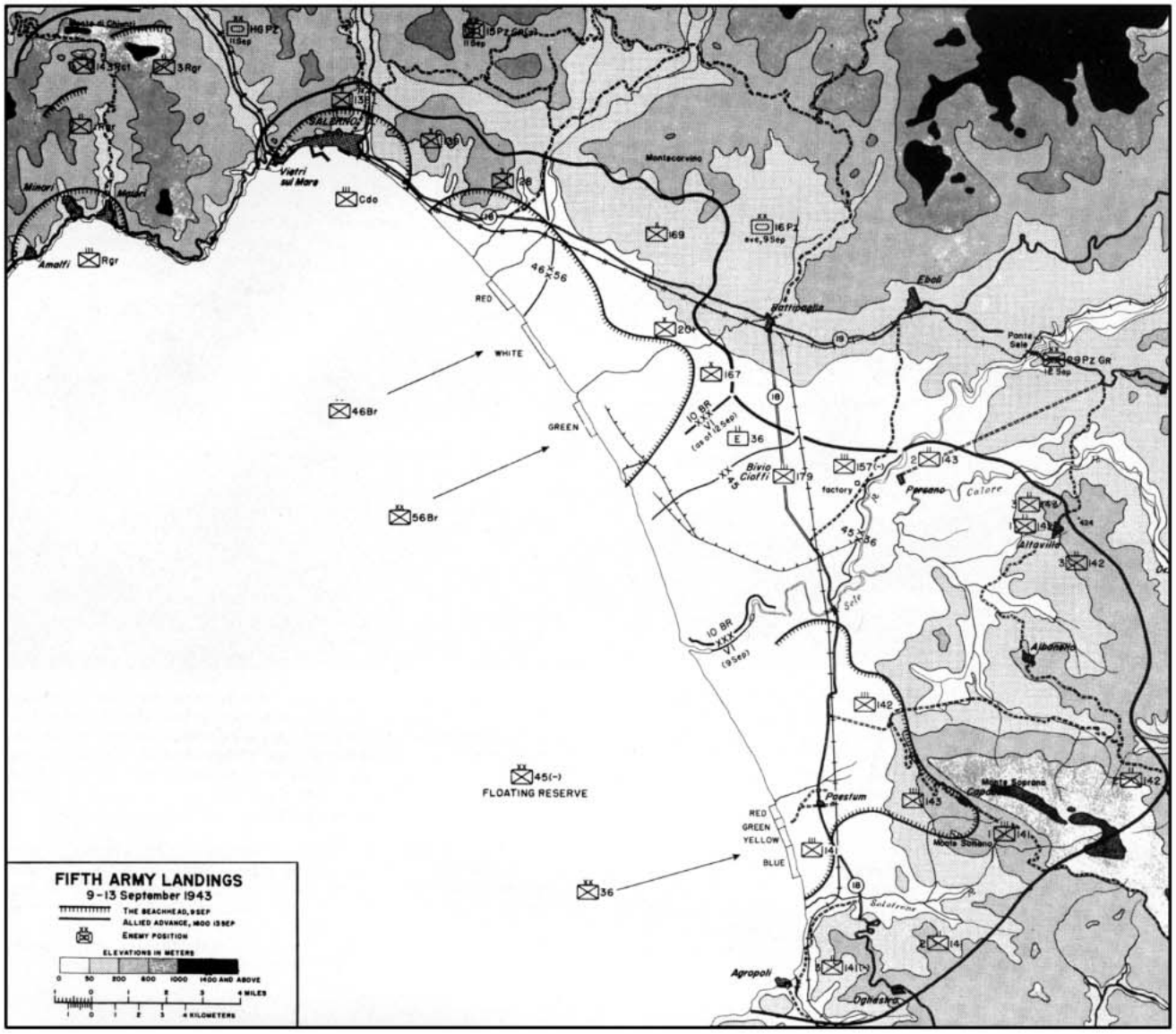
To breach the enemy defences, we had the British 46th and 56th Divisions under Lieutenant-General Sir Richard L. McCreery's X Corps and the US 36th Division under Major General Ernest J. Dawley's VI Corps, plus American Rangers, British Commandos, and part of the US 45th Division as a floating reserve. In all, we had about 30,000 British troops and 25,000 Americans to storm defences that were mounted by some 20,000 German troops in the Salerno area with 100,000 others able to converge on us in short order.

One thing that bothered me as we approached D-Day was the theory on which our command was based. In practice at Salerno it worked out well, except for one incident, but that does not lessen my objections to the basic system. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Allied commander in chief in the Mediterranean, was the supreme authority, and he had not only complete unity of command at the top, but the authority to enforce it at AFHQ (Allied Forces Headquarters). My idea was — and still is — that at Salerno one commander might well have been given the complete authority over all services during various phases of the battle. British General Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander had command of the 15th Army Group, which included the Fifth Army and the Eighth Army, and he was my immediate superior, but his headquarters was in Sicily, and he was in no position to influence actions at Salerno; and, anyway, the air and naval commands participating in that operation were responsible to the Supreme Commander rather than to Alexander.

Three commanders were designated at Salerno: British Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, commander of the Mediterranean Air Command, for air; Vice Admiral Hewitt for the Navy; and myself for the ground forces. I accepted Hewitt as being in command until we had landed and established a toehold on the beaches. Until that time, Hewitt would have to depend on co-operation with Tedder for air cover; after we landed, I would have to do the same in order to get air support for ground operations. Such a system, it seemed to me, could lead to grave difficulties. This was impressed on me after we were at sea, when I asked Major General Edwin J. House, who was our very able air liaison officer (and commanding the US XII Air Support Command) what provision had been made to guard our convoy against air attack, and he said that he didn't know because that was in the hands of the Northwest African Coastal Air Force; his own duties did not begin until we had landed and needed fighter-plane support from Sicily. Another example arose after the landing when I went ashore to determine where I wanted to bring in my floating reserve. When I returned to the *Ancon*, I discovered that Hewitt had received orders from his superiors to land the reserve immediately because their landing craft were needed to bring up reinforcements, so he had to put them ashore — in the wrong place, of course.

My belief is that a single command should be established over all three arms. For our purposes in an operation such as Salerno, the Navy commander should be in control of air support and everything else during the period required to get the assault forces to their destination and established with a firm toehold ashore. Then the ground force commander should assume a similar rôle, having control over air support and such naval support

Right: **Basing their anti-invasion tactics mainly on small groups of tanks roving behind the beaches, the Axis forces had put less effort in reinforcing the latter. Nevertheless, a few teller mines had been laid at random 10 to 15 yards from the water's edge in a belt extending 60 to 100 yards inland, trees had been felled to create a field of fire, and machine guns protected by barbed-wire obstacles had been sited to cover the most likely landing spots. All were manned by troops of the 16. Panzer-Division, the Germans having quickly taken over the Italian positions when Italy capitulated on the eve of the invasion. Ultra, the Allied decrypts of secret German radio messages, had given the Allies a very good picture of the disposition of German divisions in Italy before the invasion. Ultra also made clear that the Germans were well aware of the probability of an Allied landing in the Gulf of Salerno, and were making preparations for defence, but that, at the same time, they were still being deceived by Operation 'Mincemeat' (see *After the Battle* Nos. 54 and 94) and other Allied deception plans into expecting landings in Corsica, Sardinia and the Balkans. (USNA)**



Fifth Army plans called for coordinated assaults on beaches in the Bay of Salerno by two corps. British X Corps was to land north of the Sele river with two divisions, the 46th and 56th Infantry Divisions; and US VI Corps south of that river with one, the 36th Infantry Division. American Rangers and British Commandos were to secure the northern flank. Floating reserve consisted of two regimental combat teams (RCTs) of the US 45th Infantry Division. (Although this American map identifies the British beaches as code-named Red, White and Green, in British plans they were known as Uncle, Sugar and Roger respectively.)

as is necessary or as can be allotted to him. Thus, responsibility for the over-all operation would be firmly designated, and the possibility of confusion, conflicting orders, or an error such as landing the reserve at the wrong place would be reduced to a minimum.

The actual transfer of command from the Navy commander to the Army commander might seem to raise difficulties in the midst of a battle, but in practice Salerno demonstrated that it was feasible. Hewitt, under stiff bombing attack and with countless problems to solve regarding naval operations, didn't delay in asking me, 'When can you take over?' I had been only too happy to be a passenger while Hewitt wrestled so ably with the problem of getting us ashore but when the land fighting started I have no doubt that he was just as happy to hand the job over to me while he lent powerful and much-needed support from the sea. Of course, there may be some situations where special circumstances would prevent complete unity of command, but in general, wherever the three services fight together, regardless of the size of the forces involved, we should strive to have but one head man. Otherwise we will have extra echelons of command existing side by side, as we had in Italy, with the result that never were so few commanded by so many.

Problems of this nature were very much in my mind on that circuitous route across the Mediterranean to Salerno. I suppose that I was making mental preparations for the worst that could happen; but I recall that I also discussed with my staff such pleasant possibilities as a direct move into Naples harbour if the Italian surrender cleared our path to a greater extent than we actually anticipated.

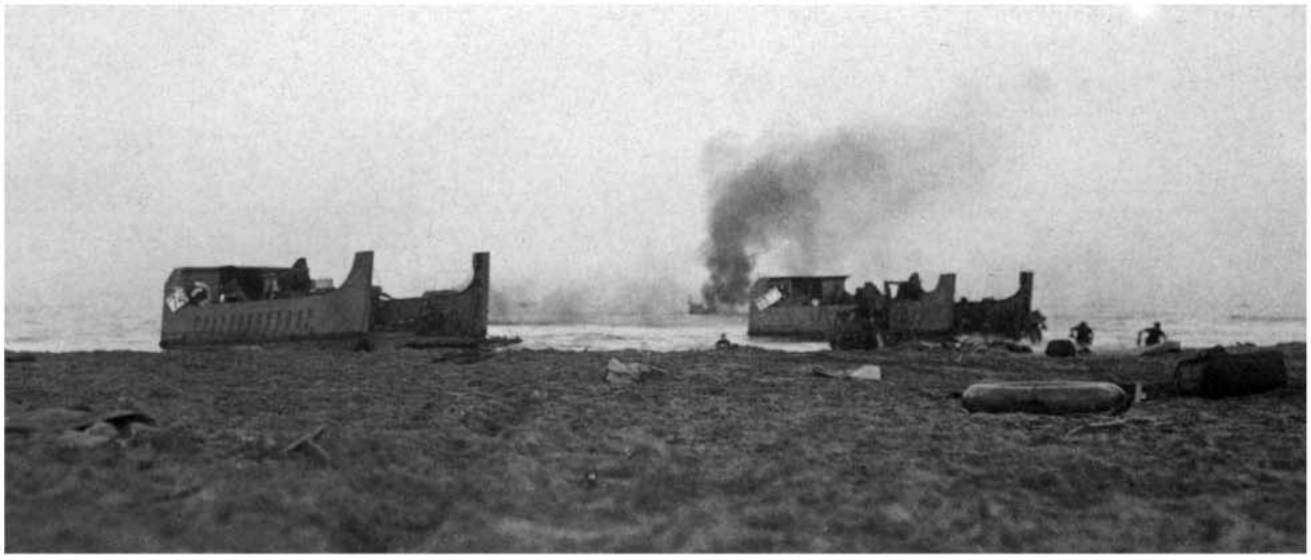
It is interesting to recall that as we approached Italian shores we entertained a number of theories that were going to be knocked sky-high when the fighting got under way. One of these, which was particularly held by the British, was that if we struck Italy with sufficient force and secured suitable ports and airfields for big-scale operations, the Germans would soon decide not to give battle, but pull back to northern Italy. This theory, which originated in high Intelligence sources in London and was reflected throughout the British Intelligence in the Mediterranean, was based on the argument that the enemy would be unable to maintain his strength in Italy because of poor transport facilities through mountainous territory and because of our air superiority. We gave the theory a good try. Allied bombers worked over the enemy communication lines for many weeks, and, finally, for months and even years. The Brenner Pass, the tunnels, the bridges, were battered steadily, but the theory was a complete flop. The Germans kept on increasing their strength in Italy until the very end, and were able to battle us for every foot of Italian soil.

On September 8, we sat in Hewitt's cabin and listened to the radio broadcasts of the unconditional surrender of the Italian government. Before sunset that evening, our transports and warships were in three lines approaching a designated area off Salerno, where minesweepers moved in to clear a path to the beaches. The sea was smooth, the sky was clear, and at ten minutes to midnight we lay, with engines stopped, only a few miles from the shore. I joined Hewitt on the bridge of the *Ancon*. I have already said that this naval phase of the assault was out of my hands, but I had not realised how helpless I would feel as everywhere in the darkness around us the officers and men of the Fifth Army started that last dash towards the beaches. There was nothing we could do but wait.

The US 36th Division (the 'Texas Division') launched simultaneous assaults on four beaches at Paestum. On the left, the 142nd Regimental Combat Team assaulted Red and Green Beaches. Landing on schedule at 0330 from LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel), the assault waves were greeted by intense fire from machine guns, field pieces, mortars and tanks. Both the 3rd Battalion on Red and the 2nd Battalion on Green were pinned down from time to time but, by creeping, crawling and running, they eventually reached the initial objective, the railway line that runs 2,500 yards inland from the beach. From there, they moved north-east to secure Hill 140, one of the foothills of the mountain arc. (Of course, no pictures exist of the first waves who landed in the dark. These pictures are of the follow-up waves who came ashore just after dawn.) (USNA)

Our landings were on a strip of coast about 26 miles long, extending from Maiori, just west of the town of Salerno, southward to Paestum and Agropoli. As the men clambered into landing craft and the small boats manoeuvred noisily into position all around us, I could see flashes of gun-fire on the north sector of the assault zone where British warships were laying down a barrage in front of the British X Corps' first wave. On the southern sector the American VI Corps was attempting to land quietly without previous bombardment, but there were ominous hints that the enemy was on the alert. Flares and the flames of demolition fires could be seen in that area as the 142nd Regimental Combat Team, led by Colonel John D. Forsythe, and the 141st Regimental Combat Team under Colonel Richard J. Werner — both of the 36th Division — felt their landing crafts touch bottom on the shore at 3.30 a.m.

On the right, the 141st Regimental Combat Team assaulted Yellow and Blue Beaches. The 3rd Battalion on Yellow was pinned down after advancing inland some 400 yards but, moving forward singly or in small groups, also managed to reach the railway line. At 0530, the follow-up 2nd Battalion landed on Yellow. After jointly fighting off several counter-attacks by tanks of the 16. Panzer-Division, the battalions advanced further although they failed to reach their D-Day objectives. (USNA)



The 1st Battalion of the 141st on Blue had the stickiest time of all assault battalions in the whole operation. Enemy fire became particularly fierce with the arrival of the third wave. Some boats suffered direct hits and drifted helplessly while the men shed their equipment and swam ashore. Others turned back or changed direction. For a while, chaos and confusion reigned on Blue Beach. Picture by US Signal Corps photographer Potter. (USNA)

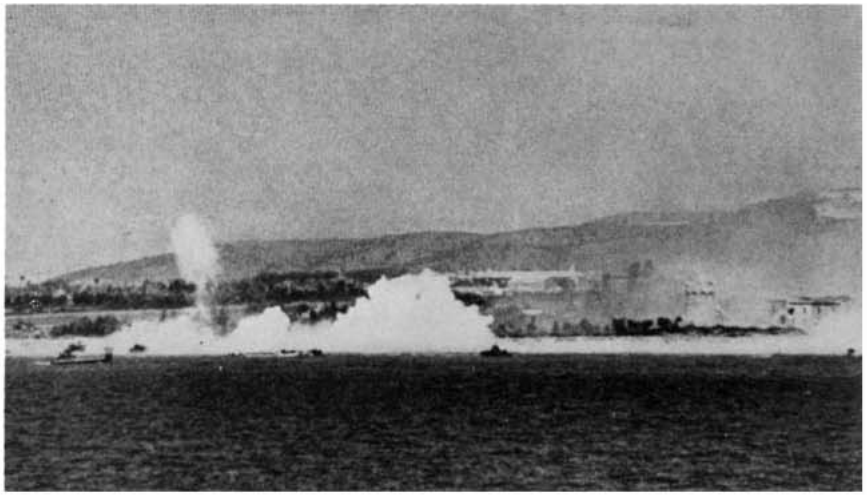
Pinned down by machine-gun fire and tanks moving back and forth in front of their lines, the 1st Battalion troops sought cover in the patches of scrub and shallow irrigation ditches. Casualties were heavy. Landing here became impossible and subsequent waves had to land further north. In effect, the 1st Battalion was cut off from the rest of the division. Radio contact with it was not established until the morning of D+1, patrols finally making physical contact later in the day. From the edge of Blue Beach, Signal Corps photographer Lieutenant Benson pictured troops hiding in the undergrowth while a German mortar barrage rains down on the forward troops. (USNA)

Then, to end any doubt about surprise, a loudspeaker voice on the shore roared out in English, 'Come on in and give up. You're covered.' Flares shot high into the air to illuminate the beaches, and German guns previously sited on the beaches opened up with a roar. The assault forces came on in, but not to give up. There was resistance on every beach and within a short time the defenders were strengthened by artillery and planes, so that our opposition increased steadily as dawn approached. Some boats in the first assault wave were unable to reach their designated beaches and had to shift to other sectors, especially Red Beach, where opposition was lighter; while many of the second-wave boats were badly damaged or had to turn back on their first attempt to get ashore. Men were separated from weapons in the confusion or when their boats sank. Radio communication was difficult in most instances because of loss of equipment and the intense enemy fire.

Beach cabins prevent a perfect match, but this is Blue Beach today.

Left: **From positions overlooking the beach, a StuG III of the 16. Panzer-Division fires at the oncoming landing craft.** *Right:* **Nearby, two officers observe the effect of the shelling. Although Karel drove around for hours, he was unable to find the bridge or viaduct at which these two pictures by SS-Kriegsberichter Büschel were taken. However, since they, and the one of the 88mm gun** *(below left)*, **are about the only German pictures of which it is certain that they were taken at the Salerno front and during the very first days of the battle, they well merit inclusion without comparison. (RIOD)**

The 16. Panzer-Division operated in four battle groups, each built around a battalion or a regiment; from north to south were Kampfgruppen Dörnemann, Stempel, von Holtey and von Doering.



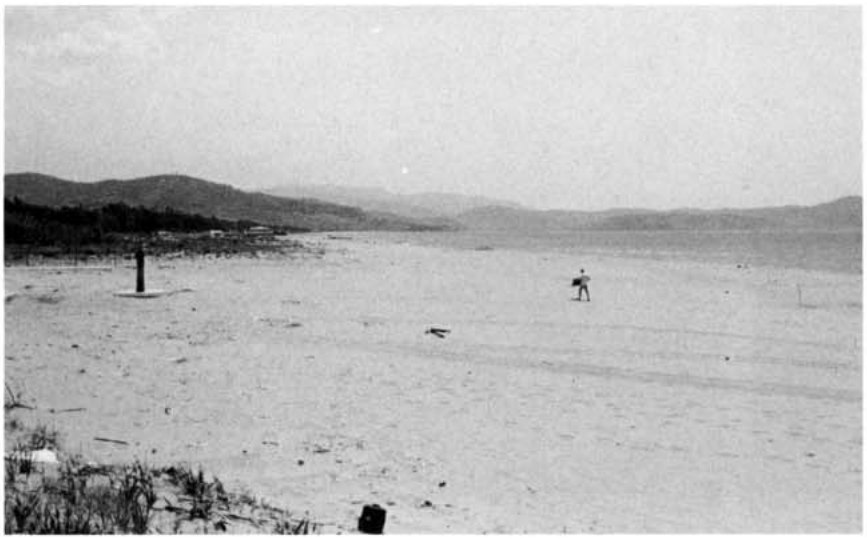
Right on the edge of the beach, on the boundary between Yellow and Blue, stood the 50-foot medieval Tower of Paestum, built to guard against the Saracen invaders of another era. From the balcony at its top, German machine gunners and snipers fired on the assault troops, backed by several tanks from behind the buildings just to the north. In this shot of Green Beach the tower is visible on the right.

1st Lieutenant George L. Shumaker, commanding Company D of the 531st Shore Engineers, led a small group of his men and several infantrymen in an attack on the tower, destroying the machine guns and driving off the tanks. Corporal Howard J. Tucker picked off the snipers. Shumaker was wounded in both arms, but his men carried on until all Germans had been killed or captured. *Above:* **The tower today.**

But owing to sound basic training and countless instances of personal bravery, the assault forces not only held on, but slowly advanced inland. Men squirmed through barbed wire round mines, and behind enemy machine guns and the tanks that soon made their appearance, working their way inland and knocking out German strong points wherever possible as they headed for their assembly point on a railway that ran roughly parallel to the beach about two miles away. Singly and in small groups, they reached their first objective by devious means. Private J. C. Jones collected 50 stragglers, guided them off the beach through heavy fire, and destroyed several enemy machine-gun posts. Sergeant Manuel S. Gonzales wriggled on his belly through heavy rifle fire and grenade bursts, and with his own grenades killed an 88mm gun crew. Private James M. Logan killed three Germans who rushed at him, firing rifles, from a wall, shot near-by machine gunners, and turned the weapon on the rest of the gun crew as they fled. Lieutenant Clair F. Carpenter and Corporal Edgar L. Blackburn, manning a 75mm self-propelled howitzer in a defile swept by enemy fire from both flanks, knocked out a machine-gun nest and a tank before they were cut down by a heavy burst of fire. There were countless other acts of heroism.

Right: **The artillery comes ashore. The 131st, 132nd, and 133rd and 151st Field Artillery Battalions had loaded their 105mm howitzers, together with ammunition and a gun crew of seven men, on DUKWs. Other DUKWs carried extra ammo and were equipped with small cranes for unloading the guns. The first guns of the 131st landed on Yellow about 0600, the 151st coming ashore at 0725. The 132nd landed on Green at 0730, and the 133rd on Red around noon. Unloading right behind the dune line, the guns immediately went into action, helping to stave off the German attacks. (USNA)**

Under great difficulties, heavy weapons were being landed by dawn. DUKWs brought in 105mm howitzers of the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion, and the 151st Field Artillery Battalion landed at 7.25 a.m., just in time to beat off a dangerous German tank assault on the beach-head. The veteran 531st Shore Engineers began organising the communication and supply lines, and bulldozer men, ignoring a steady fire which inflicted many casualties among them, built exit routes for vehicles to move from the beaches through the sand-dunes.



Above: **Basing himself on the first official American account of the Salerno landings (the War Department pamphlet *Salerno*, published as part of the 'American Forces in Action Series' in August 1944), General Clark in his account describes how the assault troops were greeted by a strident loudspeaker voice saying in English 'Come on in and give up. We have you covered.' However, Major General Fred Walker, the 36th Division commander, has denied that this ever happened: 'None of my units have included any such incident in their reports. I have never heard it mentioned by my own personnel in connection with the Salerno operation.' Official US Army historian Martin Blumenson, trying to explain the discrepancy in the 1969 official volume *Salerno to Casino*, has suggested that the fanciful story may have originated from the sight of US beach personnel using loudspeakers to direct incoming landing ships and boats, as in these shots of the field artillery DUKWs. (USNA)**

LSTs bring in tanks and trucks. The American landings included two tank battalions, the 191st and 751st. Six LCTs with tanks of the 191st Tank Battalion heading for Blue Beach with the sixth wave at 0630 were turned back by enemy shells, and did not beach until 1100. The 751st managed to land one tank on Red at 0830, another on Blue at 0930 and three on Red between 1000 and 1330, all from LCMs. The balance of both battalions came in by LSTs, as seen in this late-afternoon picture by Signal Corps photographer Oliver. On the right are rolls of beach matting used to build roads over the sand. In the centre are men of the medical battalions which had collecting companies on the beaches as early as 0400. (USNA)

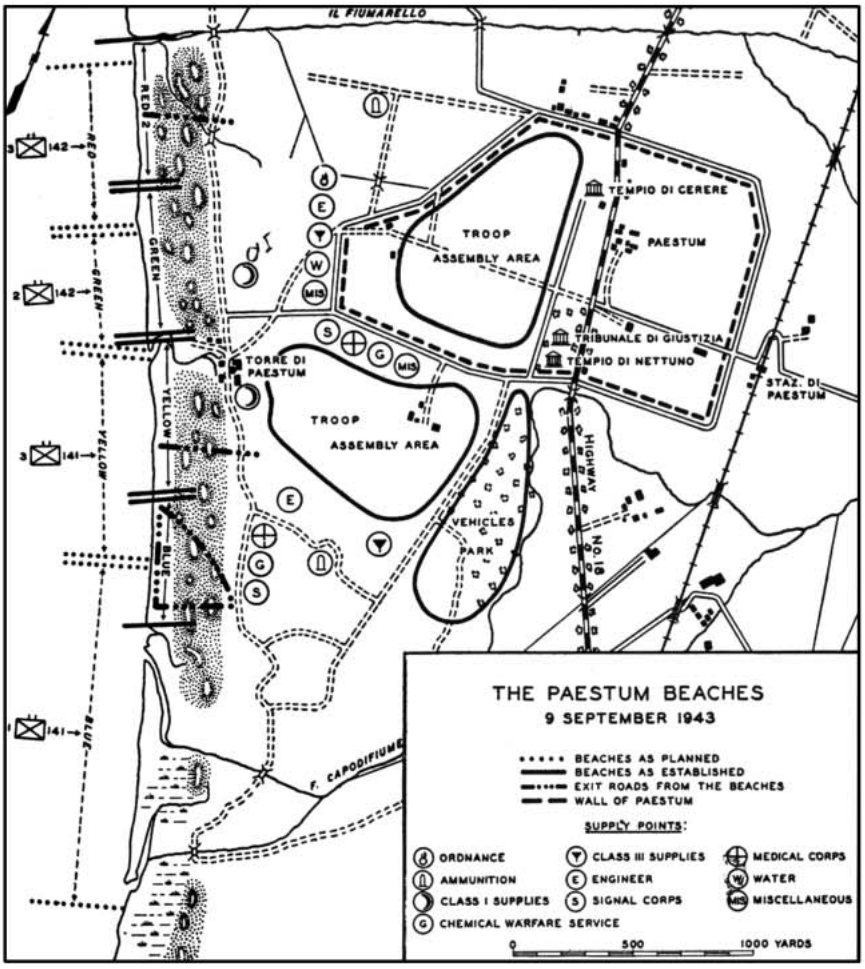
Left: Beach clearing and beach organisation were in the hands of the 531st Engineer Shore Regiment and the 4th Naval Battalion. The Army engineers removed wire obstacles, lifted mines, opened exit routes, unloaded ships and set up supply dumps, while the Navy men established ship-to-shore communication and directed incoming ships. Lieutenant Benson pictured a first-aid team of the 4th Naval Battalion kneeling beside a 36th Division doughboy who has been killed beside a radio Jeep on Yellow Beach. *Right:* Later in the day, Benson's colleague Oliver pictured the same Jeep, now wrecked by a direct hit from a German 88mm gun. The body of the young GI had in the meantime been removed. (USNA)

The same range of hills at the southern end of Salerno Bay is visible in both pictures. This is Yellow Beach today.

Above: **Benson had meanwhile pictured a German Bf109 which was hit by American AA fire and had crash-landed on the boundary of Yellow and Blue Beach. Despite a massive air umbrella over the invasion area, several German planes slipped through the Allied defences to bomb and harass troops on the beach and in landing craft. In all, the Luftwaffe made 162 sorties on D-Day. The Allies claimed to have destroyed 45 planes, mostly on the ground. (USNA)**

In this manner, our toehold on Fortress Europe was gained and no soldiers ever fought more bravely than the men of the 36th Division. I have spoken of their landing in detail both because it was the most difficult, since they were untested troops, and because they were among the first Americans to put foot on Hitler-held Continental Europe; but I do not want to seem to overlook the tremendous job that the rest of the Fifth Army was doing at the same time. The British veterans performed in splendid fashion.

On the bridge of the *Ancon*, it was a long time before we could begin to put together a picture that told us much, or that would give me an affirmative answer to Admiral Hewitt's question, 'Are you ready to take over?' In an assault from the sea the first problem is to win elbow-room so that enemy fire can be reduced on the beaches, supplies unloaded, and command posts and communications set up. During that difficult period the beachmaster is a key man. A good beachmaster must be the symbol of authority, the traffic cop and the brains of early landing operations, and at Salerno I had one of the best in Brigadier General Mike O'Daniel. Out of the chaos he slowly moulded a traffic system that could handle the incoming boats while the first assault fanned out to widen our grip ashore and knock out the artillery and tanks that kept the beach under fire. Signs went up to identify landing spots, radio contacts were established with the *Ancon* and other ships, naval fire was directed against enemy positions, guns and supplies began to roll in, and wounded were collected and evacuated to ships.



Right: **The American landing sector at Paestum. Because of the intense and continued German shelling of Blue and Yellow Beaches, later landings here were halted and boats diverted north to Green and Red. An extra beach, Red 2, was later opened as an extension of Red. The map also shows the location of the various service and supply installations set up behind the beaches.**

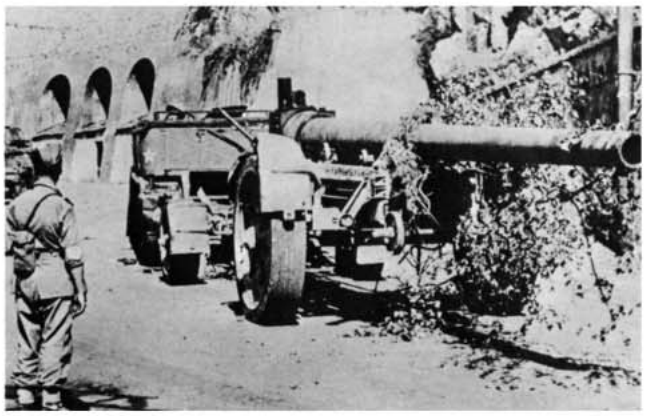
Meanwhile, at the other end of the Fifth Army assault area, on the extreme northern flank, three American Ranger battalions under Lieutenant Colonel William O. Darby had come ashore at the seaside village of Maiori, about eight miles due west of Salerno. They were to secure the Chiunzi Pass, one of the vital mountain corridors to Naples. Landing unopposed at 0310, 20 minutes before the main assault, the 4th Rangers formed a bridgehead; the 1st and 3rd passed through moving inland.

At this point, the first serious crisis was almost over. In any event, our assault progressed slowly and, by nightfall of the first day, with air cover from our Sicily bases, I felt that we had achieved as much as could be expected. On our north sector British Commandos and American Rangers under Lieutenant-Colonel William O. Darby, an outstanding battle leader, had been highly successful in surprising the enemy and seizing high ground near Maiori as the anchor of our left flank. This was of the greatest importance, because it provided us with a vantage point for observation and artillery fire, and denied it to the enemy. The Germans counter-attacked there repeatedly in the following days, but Darby's fine leadership and the determination of his men turned back all assaults; with later reinforcements, they held their ground and played a vital rôle in the battle, and, later, in the capture of Naples.

By daylight, the Rangers had reached the 2,600-foot-high Chiunzi Pass, occupied the heights on either side and reconnoitred routes to Pagani and Nocera Inferiore. Their position offered a spectacular view of the plain of Naples, and a perfect observation post for naval and artillery shoots on German troop concentrations. Robert Capa of *Life* magazine pictured a self-propelled 75mm gun on half-track supporting the Rangers at the top of the pass.

Despite repeated German attempts by troops of the Panzer-Division Hermann Göring to dislodge them, the Ranger Force held on to the pass for three weeks, until X Corps finally was ready to break out of the bridgehead in late September.

Coupled with the Ranger landings, British Commandos came ashore at the village of Vietri sul Mare, just west of Salerno. Their tasks were to turn east along the coastal road and enter Salerno, and to seize another mountain pass on the road to Naples, the Cava-Nocera Pass on Highway 18. Leading the assault, No. 2 Commando, carried in LCAs, landed at 0330 and cleared the beach defences. No. 41 (Royal Marine) Commando followed in three LCIs and before dawn had occupied the pass at La Molina. Two troops of No. 2 Commando moving towards Salerno at dawn found entry blocked by German AFVs.

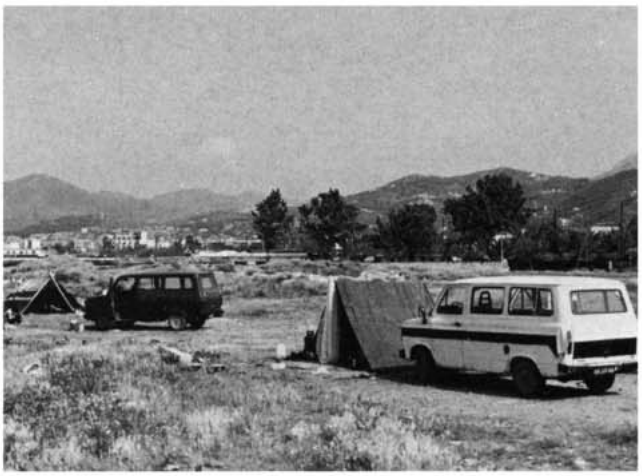


While the rest carried on to begin the climb up to the pass, part of No. 41 Commando was left behind to block the main road through Vietri. They had hardly set up position when a German half-track towing a 210mm field gun barrel on a limber came trundling round a bend from the direction of Salerno. Lance

Corporal George Simpson, on the Bren gun, and the riflemen of No. 8 Section of Q Troop opened up in the darkness, killing the driver and other occupants of the front seat. The other dozen or so Germans in the back of the vehicle spilled out and were all taken prisoner. (RIOD)

Left: The gun was pictured by AFPU photographer Sergeant Bowman, who had come ashore on the main beaches and arrived at Vietri later. The first unit to link up with the Commandos was B Squadron of the 46th Recce Regiment, who drove through Salerno during the morning of D-Day with a group of sapper reinforcements. However, the carrier on the right probably belongs to one of the infantry battalions which came to reinforce the Commando force on D+1. (IWM) *Right:* The gun was ambushed where the coast road from Salerno enters Vietri near Piazza Amendola.

The main X Corps landings took place south of Salerno. Unlike the American assault, they were preceded by a naval bombardment. The British 46th Division attacked on a one-brigade front, its 128th Brigade landing on two beaches — Uncle Green and Uncle Red — between the rivers Picentino and Asa. The 1/4th Hampshires on the left landed correctly and without opposition at Uncle Red, and advanced steadily inland until they gained their objectives along the high ground to the north-east. The follow-up 138th Brigade began landing at 0700. *Above:* **AFPU Sergeant Wackett photographed carriers of 138th Brigade disembarking from LST 314. The front vehicle belongs to the 6th Lincolns. (IWM)** *Right:* **The mountains vaguely visible in the far distance enable us to pinpoint the picture as having been taken on the beach at Pastena, between Uncle Red and Salerno town.**



Left: **On the right, the 2nd Hampshires, heading for Uncle Green, were misled by a supporting salvo from a rocket landing craft which landed incorrectly just south of the Asa and, as a result, the whole first wave beached on the wrong side of the river, in the 56th Division sector. The follow-up 5th Hampshires had confused landings too, and both battalions were engaged in a sharp fight on and near the beaches which centred around the German 'Lilienthal' strong point near Magazzea. Sergeant Bowman photographed the first batch of German prisoners taken. The American 'Seabee' posing as guard probably came from one of the American landing craft. (IWM)** *Right:* **Other squatters in the same field today. The picture was taken looking west near Torre Angellara. The line of trees in the middle distance marks the coastal road.**

South of the Asa, and on either side of the Tusciano river, the 56th Division landed on a two-brigade front on four beaches, the 169th (Queen's) Brigade on the left on Sugar Amber and Sugar Green, and the 167th Brigade on the right on Roger Amber and Roger Green. Although side-pushed to the right by the 46th Division's mislandings, the Queen's battalions had a not too difficult landing. One company of the 2/5th waded through seemingly endless water until banks, looming up on either side, showed that it was in fact wading up the Tusciano river! *Right:* **Sergeant Lambert landed on Sugar Amber and pictured a machine gun team of the 2/6th Queen's just inland from the beach. (IWM)**

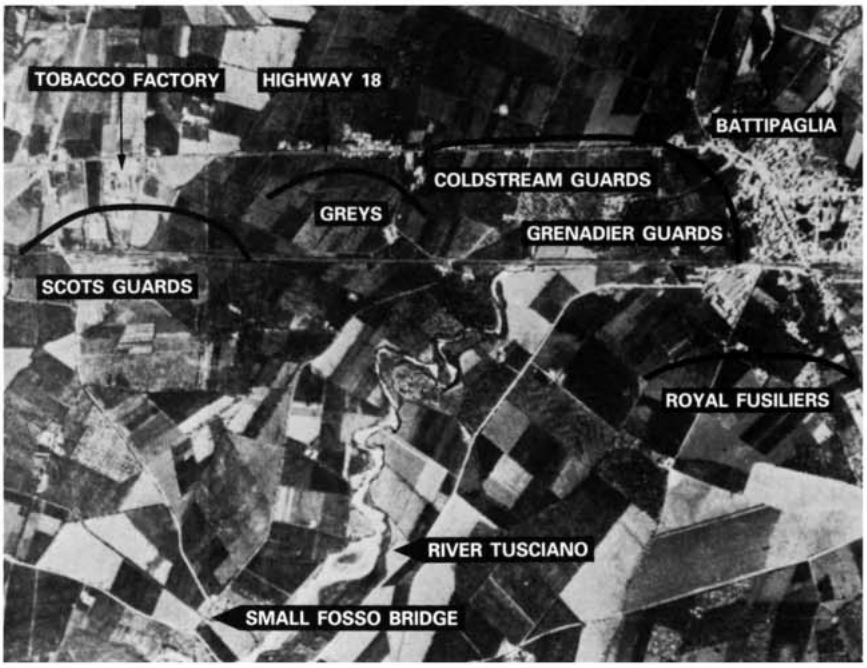
On the right flank of the Commandos, the British 46th and 56th Divisions landed at two points flanking Montecorvino airfield. McCreery sent combat teams towards the town of Salerno in co-ordination with a Commando attack on the town, and directed the remainder of his forces towards Montecorvino, three miles inland, and on towards the town of Battipaglia. They encountered heavy enemy fire on the beaches, and had to fight, with the aid of naval gunfire, almost all the way against very stubborn resistance by Panzergrenadier-Regiment 64. The British veterans were up to the job, however, and by nightfall our forces were in Salerno and patrols were in Montecorvino and Battipaglia.

There was a ten-mile gap between the British X Corps and the American VI Corps at the end of the day's struggle, but that did not seem too serious. The 36th Division, in its first test in battle, had won control of the plain south of the Sele river, and had pushed on into high ground for an average penetration of about five miles. Only on the American extreme right flank, in the direction of Agropoli, had we failed to make much progress, but even there vicious enemy counter-attacks had been successfully repulsed. By nightfall, I could feel that we had secured the beaches and were in a position to close the gap between X and VI Corps and to start the drive for the dominating mountain heights which we must seize and through which we must pass towards Naples.

Left: **The 167th Brigade had a good landing with little opposition on the beach. Both the 8th and 9th Royal Fusiliers pushed quickly inland towards their objective, the important road and rail centre of Battipaglia. These troops, pictured by Captain Knight of the Army Film and Photo Unit, are 800 yards inland from the beach and marching on the Battipaglia road. (IWM)** *Right:* **Five decades later, the dirt track has been surfaced, and trees now line the road, but the distinctive buildings of the horse farm in the distance on the right help to pinpoint the same spot today.**

A short distance up the Battipaglia road, the 8th Fusiliers round up the first German prisoners. Picture by Sergeant Mott. (IWM)

Right: By the end of D-Day, the 9th Fusiliers had entered Battipaglia. Meanwhile, the 201st Guards Brigade had come up on their left, taking up positions along the south side of the Highway 18 main road from Battipaglia to a tobacco factory 1½ miles to the west and beyond to Montecorvino airfield. This stretch of road then became one of the hottest spots in the British sector. First, a determined counter-attack by Kampfgruppe von Holtey on D+1 threw the 9th Fusiliers out of Battipaglia. They fell back in chaos and panic on the armour of the Royal Scots Greys and on the 6th Grenadier Guards, who, however, managed to hold their ground. Next evening, September 11, the Grenadiers, by now reinforced by two Coldstream Guards companies, were themselves attacked sharply and, with groups of Coldstreams and a company of Grenadiers breaking to the rear in panic, it appeared for a while the whole position was in danger of being overrun. However, the rest of the Grenadiers and the Scots Greys tanks stood firm and the line held. Meanwhile, the tobacco factory at the crossroads to the west was the scene of a series of stiff fights between the 2nd Scots Guards and the Germans.



The Tobacco Factory, a collection of solid agricultural warehouses surrounded by an eight-foot-high spiked railing, was held by II. Bataillon of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 64 (16. Panzer-Division). In their first attempt to capture the place, on D+1, the Scots Guards got inside the compound but, after a confused hide-and-seek battle with enemy tanks firing from inside the buildings, had to hastily withdraw back across the fence. In a renewed attempt, the following evening, C Company got inside, only to be completely overrun later. Heavily contested for over a week, the factory was not finally captured until the 18th, after the Germans had withdrawn. *Above:* Today, the factory is still in business, although the wire fences have now gone.

Left: The Shermans of A Squadron of the Royal Scots Greys were in support of 167th Brigade. On D-Day, they had helped the 8th Fusiliers drive off some German tanks met on the Battipaglia road, and Captain Knight photographed them in action just to the south-west of the town. (IWM) *Right:* Haze obscured the hills in 1943, but this is the same road today.

Right: **On D+1, September 10, the 46th Division entered Salerno in strength. Here, troops march into the town past an Italian anti-tank barrier. (IWM)**

On the following day, September 10, it became clear that the main German strength was massed on our left, against the British X Corps, which met strong opposition as it tried to press inland from Salerno on the most direct route towards Naples.

I had gone ashore on September 10, the day after the initial landings, principally to select a place to land the 157th Regimental Combat Team, which was in my floating reserve. Major General Fred L. Walker, in command of the 36th, had been reporting directly to me on the *Ancon*, rather than to General Dawley, in order to avoid delaying decisions until Dawley got his headquarters with its communications ashore. I found Walker's situation favourable, and morale appeared to be high.

On the beach I also found Mike, the German police dog, which had been presented to me at Oudjda in North Africa. There was a strict rule against taking dogs on the transports, but, unknown to me, my orderly, Sergeant William C. Chaney, had put a label on Mike's collar and turned her over to some soldiers before they went aboardship. The label said: 'This is General Clark's dog. She is going to Salerno.' Mike got there all right, and on D-Day was leaping up and down the beach so happily that she got in the way and had to be tied up.

Later, I visited General McCreery's X Corps headquarters, and we decided to reinforce the Rangers under Darby on his left flank and to land the 157th Regimental Combat Team on the British right flank in order to start closing the gap between the British and American forces. The situation looked so good that I sent a message to General Alexander saying that we soon should be ready to make the attack northward through Vietri Pass towards Naples. This proved to be an optimistic outlook, because from then on things began to happen.

The first thing that happened was that upon my return to the *Ancon* I ordered the 157th RCT to be landed on the British right flank, only to be told that it was already being unloaded in the American sector south of the Sele river. As I related earlier, Hewitt had been forced to order it ashore in my absence because his superiors in Algiers wanted the barges sent back at once. Consequently, I had to delay other units in order to get the 157th shifted to its proper position.

Sergeant Bowman's picture was taken on Via Torrione, near the crossroads with the Via Santoro. New flats on this side of the viaduct now hide the top of the hill.

AFPU Lieutenant Cliff pictured men of the 6th York & Lancaster Regiment (138th Brigade) turning north under the railway underpass on Via Torrione, on their way to start the advance up Highway 88, the Avellino road. Two miles out, they will be stopped by Kampfgruppe Dörnemann (16. Panzer-Division) at Ponte Fratte. (IWM)

A few hundred yards further on down the same street, a carrier of the 6th York & Lancaster moves through a part of the town damaged by bombing and naval gun-fire. Another picture by Sergeant Bowman. (IWM)

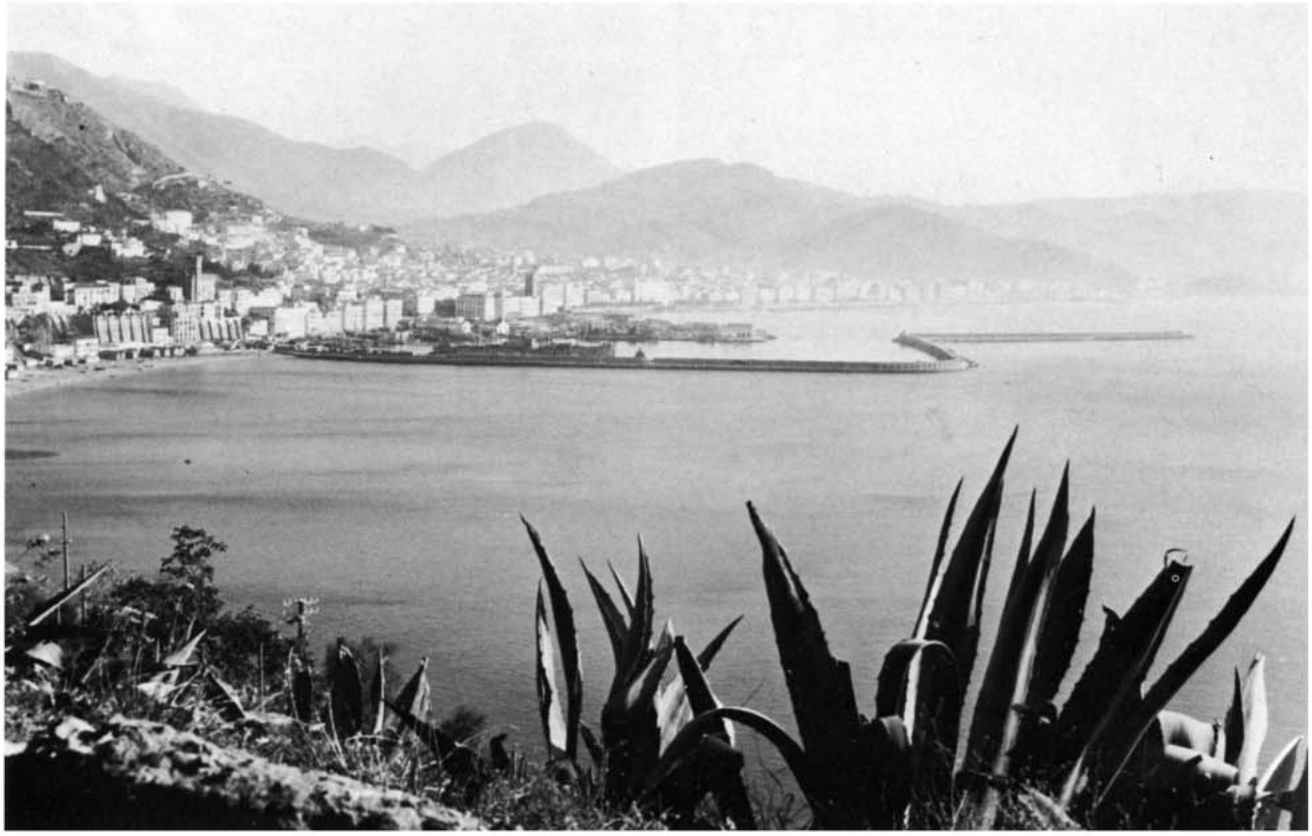
Salerno town suffered considerable damage from shelling and aerial bombing. The objective of repeated raids in the Allied pre-invasion bombing campaign from June 20 onwards, the town was also hit by the pre-H-Hour Allied naval bombardment. After D-Day, it became the target of German artillery in the hills overlooking it. *Left:* These ruins were pictured by Signal Corps photographer Groshon two months after the landings. In the foreground is the River Arno (today: Irno) and the bridge on the right forms the link between Via Torrione and Corso Garibaldi. The view is westward. The ruin-topped hill in the right background was known to the British as Castle Hill. Locally, it is known as the Castello Longobardo. (USNA)

Left: The tank unit supporting the 46th Division was the 40th Royal Tank Regiment. Here, a Sherman of the 40th RTR loaded with infantry drives westward through Salerno on their way to reinforce the Commando force at the La Molina Pass. (IWM) *Right:* Major Keating's picture was taken on Via Roma. Only the direction sign on the wall has disappeared.

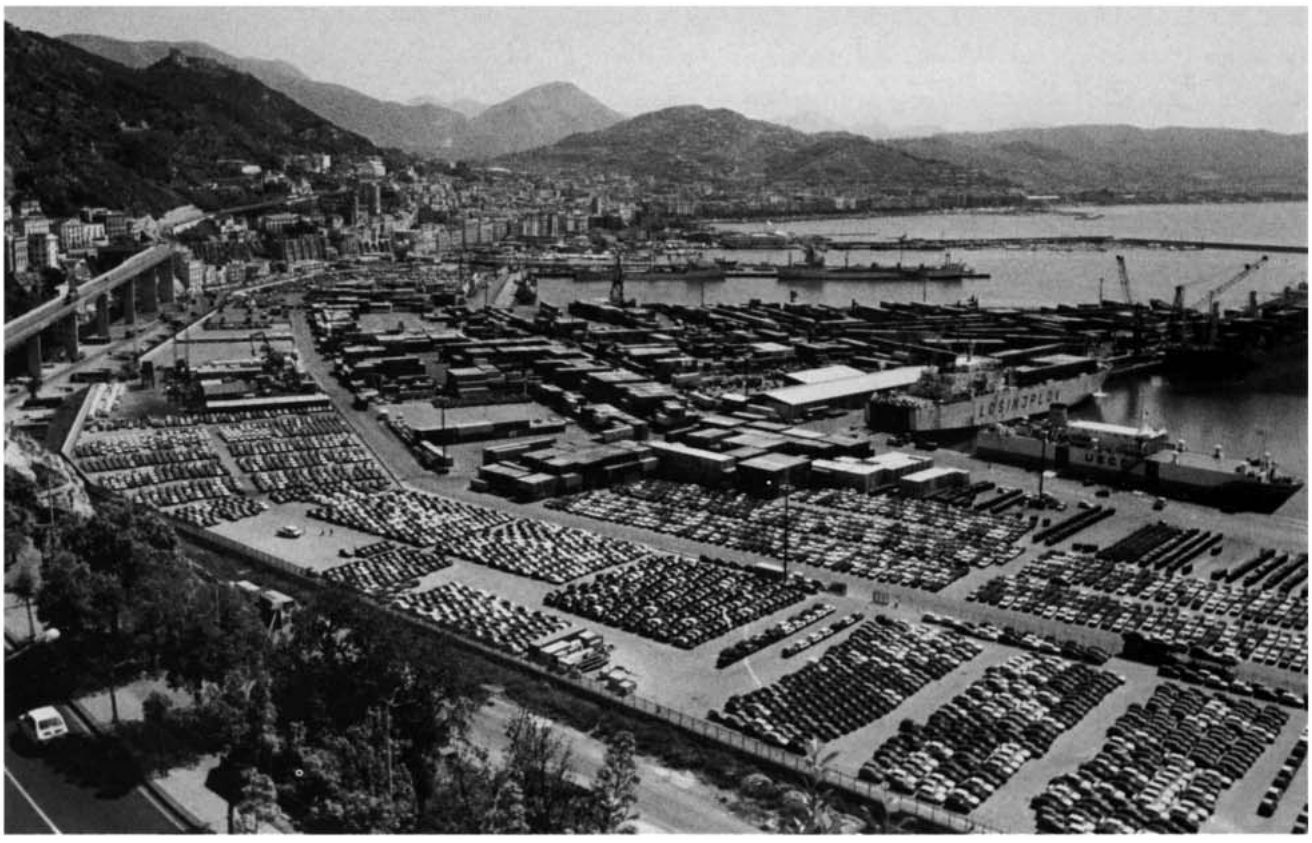
Left: **A little further on, at the western end of the town, Sergeant Wackett photographed men of the 6th Lincolns (138th Brigade) marching out of Salerno. They too are moving up to relieve the hard-pressed Commandos at La Molina. (IWM)** *Right:* **This is Via Independenza, looking back eastward across Piazza Mateo Luciano.**

Left: **While unloading over the beaches continued briskly, other ships ventured to dock directly in Salerno harbour. Sergeant Bowman pictured the first troops landing from LCIs on to Salerno's sea boulevard, the Lungomare Trieste, on September 10. (IWM)** *Right:* **They stepped ashore right in front of what is today the town's Carabinieri headquarters.**

A little further west along the seafront, Italian civilians offer a helpful hand in unloading LCI 249. (RIOD)



A British naval port party went to inspect Salerno harbour on D+1 (September 10) and found it little damaged or obstructed. However, German artillery, nebelwerfers and mortars in the hills overlooking the town could freely hamper movements in the harbour and, owing to this, attempts to bring Salerno into use as a port were called off on the 13th. Little use could be made of the facilities in the first two weeks of the landings. *Above:* **This picture was taken by Signal Corps photographer Groshon in November 1943. The hill on the extreme left is Castle Hill; in the centre distance lie several other, heavily-contested terrain features: White Cross Hill, scene of a fierce fight by the Hampshires on September 15; The Pimple, first attacked by No. 2 Commando on the night of September 15/16 but not finally secured until the 19th; and Forty-One Commando Hill, captured by the Marine Commandos on the 15th. (USNA)** *Below:* **Since 1943, Salerno harbour has greatly expanded, a wide strip from the water expanse to the west of the jetty having been laid dry to encompass for a huge storage platform and additional docking facilities. The picture was taken from the Salerno to Vietri coastal road.**

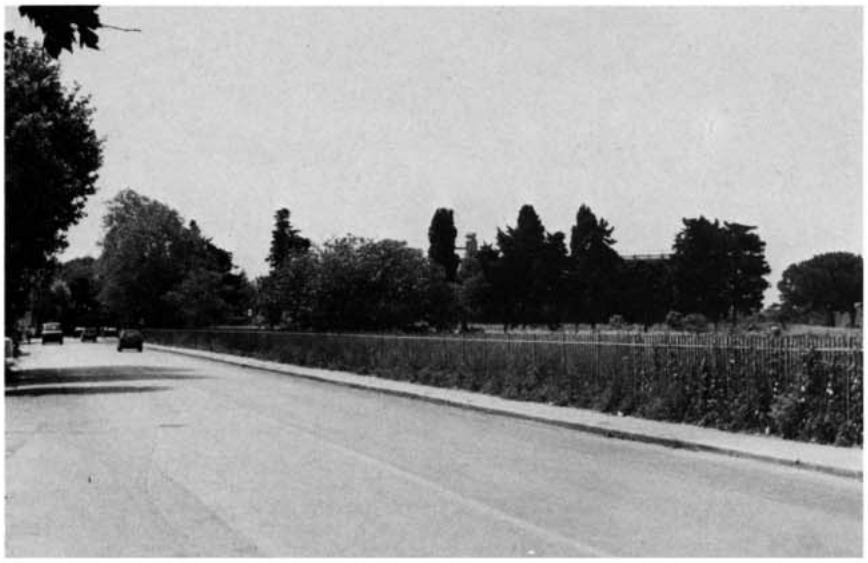


Whereas the British met strong opposition as they pressed inland on September 10, the Americans on the other hand were able to push farther inland and occupy an important range of hills from Altavilla to Ogliastro. The enemy, having failed in his tank attacks in that sector on D-Day, had withdrawn, except in a corridor formed by the Sele and Calore rivers. In that corridor, the main objective of the 45th Division was to seize an important bridge known as the Ponte Sele, about 13 miles inland on a good highway. Its 179th Regimental Combat Team was ordered to advance north-eastward and seize the Ponte Sele and the nearby hills, while the 142nd pushed into the town of Altavilla. The 179th, which had landed in the morning, moved out late on the evening of the 10th, dividing into two columns, one of which (the 2nd Battalion) advanced south of the Calore river, while the other (led by the 3rd Battalion) crossed the Calore and proceeded via Persano on a more direct northerly route towards the Ponte Sele.

The 2nd Battalion, after a four-mile march at night, forded the Calore river about three miles south of the Ponte Sele but was counter-attacked so viciously by tanks and infantry of Pioneer-Abteilung 29, plus artillery fire, that by noon it had been forced to withdraw to the south side of the Calore.

The 3rd Battalion, supported by the 1st Battalion, meanwhile had moved northward towards Persano, delayed only by a flaming bridge across the Calore, which became known thereafter as the Burned Bridge. By-passing this obstacle, the battalions continued on to Persano and swung to the right towards the Ponte Sele without stopping to occupy the high ground at Persano. They passed many wrecked and burned German vehicles, tanks, and guns, and after a brief clash with the enemy reached the river bluffs overlooking the Ponte Sele. At this point, a German tank attack turned them back.

I mention these details because they are essential to an understanding of what happened at Salerno, where it was difficult even after the battle had been fully reported for anyone except the men engaged to know how gravely disaster threatened the first Allied assault on European soil. And even in the course of battle we did not fully realise how great was the advantage of the Germans in holding all the high hills surrounding our beach-head, from which they were continually looking down our throats. Not until months later, when I had occasion to fly low over the German positions at Salerno, did I wholly realise how well the enemy had been able to observe our movements and thus shift his strength and artillery to oppose our thrusts. In this respect the German advantage was nothing less than appalling.



Meanwhile, events had unfolded in the American sector. On D+1, the 179th Regimental Combat Team of the 45th Division, which had landed on Blue Beach before noon, was ordered to attack up the valley between the Sele and Calore rivers with intention to reach Highway 19 at Ponte Sele, a move that would block the enemy's main approach route from the east. *Above:* **Here, GIs of the 179th march out of Paestum and north on Highway 18 to prepare for the attack. In the background stands the ancient Temple of Ceres. (USNA)** *Below:* **The left-hand pediment of the temple roof is visible above the trees today.**

Left: **The Highway 18 bridge across the Sele river at Ponte alla Scalfa, a vital link between the American and British sectors, was blown by the Germans in the afternoon of D-Day. On D+1, General Clark moved the VI Corps boundary to north of the river to relieve the pressure on X Corps' right flank, and ordered the river to be bridged. Engineers, working overnight, put in a new bridge which was used by the armour and the 157th Infantry the following morning. (USNA)** *Right:* **A new road bridge now spans the river at the former site of 'London Bridge'. Picture taken looking south.**

It was in such circumstances that the 45th Division had extended two fingers out from our beach-head towards the Ponte Sele, and it was there that the Germans hit the ends of those fingers and turned them back. At the same time, the enemy struck at the British in a fight for control of Montecorvino airport and the town of Battipaglia, and at the American 142nd Regiment at Altavilla. The first phase of our success was over by the afternoon of September 11, and the bitter struggle had begun between the main Allied and German forces.

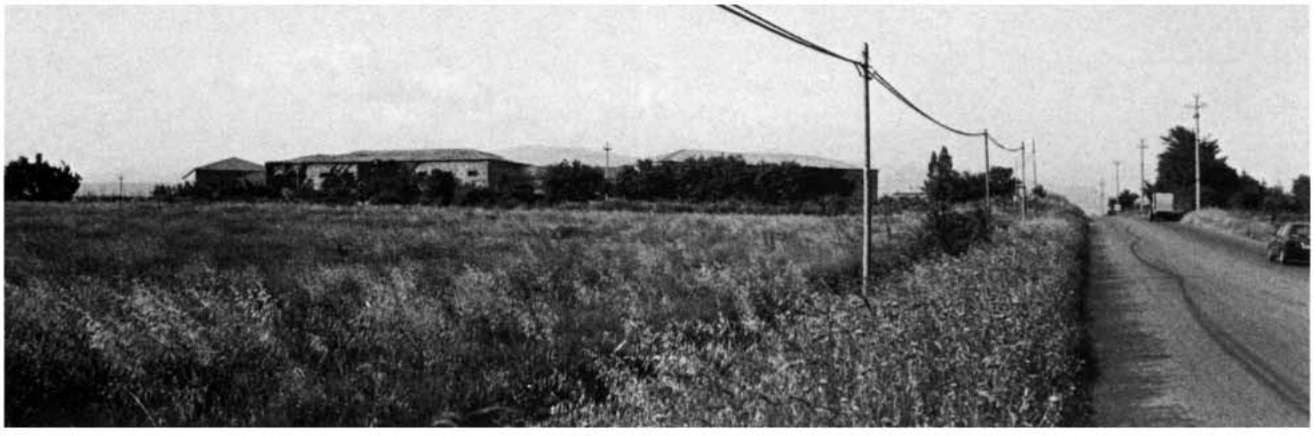
That day, as I was preparing to go ashore again, the cruiser *Savannah* passed within about 200 yards of the *Ancon*. I was on the *Ancon* bridge, and had paused to watch the cruiser, when we heard a terrific screeching noise that indicated the approach of a new type of German bomb. Although we could see no planes, we had heard these bombs the previous day, and believed, correctly, that they were radio-controlled. On this occasion, as the noise grew louder, it seemed to be heading directly towards the *Ancon*. I have no doubt that it was actually aimed at our easily identified flagship, but there was nothing much we could do except wait. Then, at the last moment, it hit the *Savannah*, just forward of her bridge, with a tremendous crash. The missile went through the cruiser's deck and exploded below, shooting flames high into the air and causing several hundred casualties on the warship.

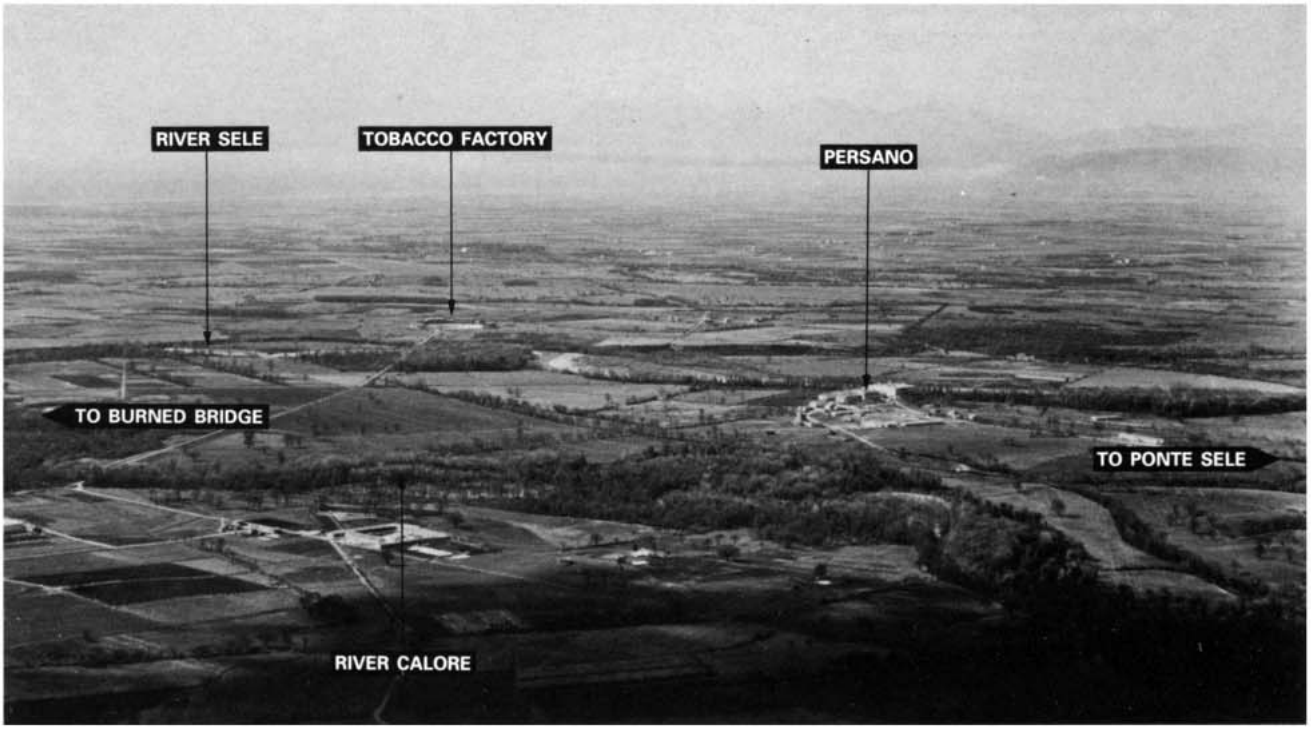
The American cruiser USS *Savannah* on fire after being hit below deck by a German radio-controlled glide-bomb on D+2. Used for the first time at Salerno, this new weapon was in fact the first guided missile in history. The main type used was the Henschel Hs-293. Launched from Do-217 bombers out of range of enemy AA fire, it had a gliding start, then changed to rocket propulsion. Other ships damaged by it were the American cruiser *Philadelphia*, the Dutch gunboat *Flores*, and the British battleship *Warspite* and cruiser *Uganda*. At Salerno, the Luftwaffe aimed their determined attacks specifically at the Allied warships, launching over 450 sorties by fighters and fighter-bombers and almost 100 by heavy bombers during the first three days of the invasion. In all, Luftflotte 2 sank four transports, one heavy cruiser and seven landing craft, and scored a total of 85 hits on the Allied fleet. (USNA)

Like the British, the Americans had a Tobacco Factory too. Theirs stood just north of Persano, on a small elevation just across the Sele river, a position which commanded the countryside all around it and controlled the Battipaglia–Eboli road. First attacked by the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry (45th Division), late on the 11th, it changed hands twice on the 12th before the Americans secured it. Then on the 13th, the German Kampfgruppe Kleine-Limberg (16. Panzer-Division) launched a strong counter-attack with tanks and armoured infantry and pushed back the Americans, retaking the factory. For over a week, until the 18th, the Germans entrenched here would completely block any American advance. *Below:* The five buildings of the Tabacchificio Fiocche still stand, although in ill-repair and seemingly no longer in use.

General Dawley had moved his headquarters ashore by the time I reached the beach again, and reports were coming in concerning difficulty with the 45th Division's thrusts towards the Ponte Sele. The British were also meeting stiff counterattacks, and their patrols had been forced out of Battipaglia. I instructed McCreery to reduce the area he was assigned, in order to mass his strength, and arranged with Dawley to shift troops from the south to meet the increased enemy strength in the northern sector along the Sele river.

When I returned to the *Ancon* — it was still not feasible to set up my headquarters ashore — I received a message from Alexander that added another chapter to the story of the 82nd Airborne Division, which had been taken away from me at the last minute to drop on Rome. [This drop had been planned at the request of the new Italian government under Marshal Pietro Badoglio, which had come to power after the fall of Mussolini in July (see *After the Battle* No. 77), and was greatly concerned what the Germans might do in Rome when they learned of the armistice.] We had frequently wondered how that venture turned out, and it was something of a surprise when Alexander said that he wanted me to know that I could 'use the 82nd in any manner you deem advisable. All combatant elements of the 82nd are now concentrated at Sicilian airfields.'





A significant corner of the Salerno battleground. Two battalions of the 179th Infantry advanced past Persano late on the 10th, and had come within a mile of Ponte Sele (four miles distant, outside the picture to the right) when, early on the 11th, a German force arrived at Persano from the north and struck at the 179th from the rear, cutting it off. The subsequent American attack on the tobacco factory just to the north-west of Persano forced the Germans to withdraw back across the Sele, allowing tanks of the 753rd Tank Battalion to occupy Persano and regain contact with the 179th early on the 12th. When the 179th was withdrawn from the Sele–Calore corridor later that day, its place was taken by the 2nd Battalion of the 143rd Infantry. Then, in the afternoon of the 13th, a determined German counter-attack from Eboli overran the tobacco factory, again crossed the Sele to this side, and totally wiped out the 2nd Battalion in its isolated position just north-east of Persano.

This was the first word I had received that the Rome drop had been called off. While we had been at sea, the 82nd's artillery commander, Brigadier General Maxwell D. Taylor, had made a daring secret trip to the Italian capital to confer with leaders of the armistice movement. I found out later that Taylor's conference with Marshal Badoglio and others in Rome had convinced him that the Italian government could not in any way produce the assistance that it had previously promised to the 82nd Airborne Division if it were dropped in the vicinity of Rome. Since the German counter-attacks were becoming steadily stronger, I was only too happy to have the paratroops available. We arranged for some of them to drop near the town of Avellino on the evening of the 13th, in order to strike at the enemy's rear lines.

The following morning, which was September 12, I moved my headquarters ashore. A large mansion that stuck up like a sore thumb had been selected, but I decided that it would be better to use my trailer, and picked out a spot in a wood a little farther to the south. I spent much of the day on the road in a jeep, moving from sector to sector, through clouds of dust that were churned up by the bursting of bombs and shells and by the heavy traffic of vehicles over narrow and unpaved roads. Although we were only a step from the clear, cool Mediterranean, the dust hung over us like a fog. We breathed dust and ate dust. Our clothes and bodies were covered with it. Some of the vehicle drivers invented a sort of mask which they strapped over their faces to protect themselves. I found that it was frequently necessary to tie a handkerchief over my face in order to breathe as I travelled about. I must sometimes have given the impression of a tall and dirty Western bandit on the prowl.

The dust was uncomfortable, but nothing compared with the discomfort that the enemy was causing. The two fingers which the 45th Division had stuck out towards the Ponte Sele were being badly bruised, and it appeared that they might be cut off. The 157th RCT, under Colonel Charles Ankcorn, which had been shifted to the British flank after being landed in the wrong sector, was instructed to advance along the Sele river to a tobacco factory on high ground near Persano, where it would be able to protect the flank of the northerly finger which the 45th Division had exposed.

Ankcorn soon discovered that the Germans had infiltrated across the river and occupied Persano, and had tanks and machine guns concealed in and around the tobacco factory where our tanks fell into a trap and were caught in a devastating fire that knocked out five of the seven involved. Thus, the high ground near Persano, which the 179th RCT was unable to occupy as it struck towards the Ponte Sele, was now held by the enemy, and served as a kind of spear-thrust into the centre of our entire beach-head. If the Germans could push that spear forward to the sea they would divide the American VI Corps from the British X Corps and gain ground from which to try to turn both flanks.

Kesselring, having gathered reinforcements, immediately set out to exploit this possibility. He sent elements of the 26. Panzer-Division, the 29. Panzergrenadier-Division, and the 16. Panzer-Division southward against the north flank of VI Corps, while the Panzer-Division 'Hermann Göring' and units of the 15. and 3. Panzergrenadier-Division attempted to drive the British X Corps from the Montecorvino area. Fighting on September 12 was approaching a new peak all along the front. A strong enemy attack drove the 1st Battalion of the 142nd Infantry out of Altavilla, a vital high point in the American sector. A similar thrust on the British front forced us to abandon Battipaglia. In the centre of the beach-head, heavy fighting swung back and forth round the tobacco factory, and elements of the 45th Division which had been pushed back from the Ponte Sele were in danger of being isolated. It was becoming obvious that General Dawley had not been fully aware of the strength of the enemy on his left flank, and had not taken steps, or been able to take steps, to protect himself from counterattack in that sector after the failure of our thrusts towards Ponte Sele and Battipaglia. Furthermore, as the counterattacks developed, it was disclosed that all the troops had been committed in a cordon defence, leaving none in reserve to meet an enemy breakthrough. We were getting into a very tight place.

I recall that about this time I had to consider the possibility that we would be driven back to the sea. A commander is always supposed to have an alternative plan, and I felt that if it came to a point where we had to abandon part of the beach-head we should be able to evacuate some troops by sea to the British sector and continue the fight from there. It was routine in such circumstances as we then faced to issue orders for the destruction, if necessary, of all supplies and equipment on the beaches. I went down to look over the vast piles of supplies on the beach and to recall the stern admonitions that had been drilled into us in school about taking precautions to prevent stores from falling into the hands of the enemy. I knew that if I were involved in a theoretical problem at the War College I would at this point get hell from some instructor if I failed to issue orders to be prepared for the possible destruction of those supplies; but this wasn't a theoretical problem, and I couldn't see how I'd do anything but damage morale if I issued such orders at Salerno. I thought it over carefully as I walked along the beach. I was dirty and tired and worried, and finally I said, 'To hell with the theory! I am not going to issue any such orders!' Furthermore, I decided, the only way they're going to get us off this beach is to push us, step by step, into the water.

Above and right: **The attack of September 13, by the combined strength of Kampfgruppe Kleine-Limberg (a mobile force of some 25 tanks, accompanied by the combat engineers of Pionier-Abteilung 16 in half-tracks, and several towed guns) from Eboli and Kampfgruppe Krüger (Panzergrenadier-Regiment 71, with part of Aufklärungs-Abteilung 26 and a company of assault guns) from Ponte Sele, was the culmination of the German attempts to drive the Allies back into the sea. (RIOD)**

The next day, September 13, I thought for a while that they were going to do just that. I began the day by sending a message to Alexander telling him to call off plans we had made to drop elements of the 82nd Airborne Division at Avellino that night. Then I wrote a letter to Major General Matthew B. Ridgway, commanding the 82nd Division, saying that the fight for the Salerno beach-head had taken a turn for the worse and that it was a touch-and-go affair. I said that I had learned only the day before that the 82nd had not dropped on Rome, and that it was now available to me.

'I want you to accept this letter as an order', I wrote, knowing that Matt Ridgway was the kind of commander you could count on. 'I realize the time normally needed to prepare for a drop, but this is an exception. I want you to make a drop within our lines on the beach-head, and I want you to make it tonight. This is a must.'

I added a few other details in order to be sure Ridgway would understand why I asked the impossible — that he make a drop within a few hours after he had received the letter. Then I sent some one out to find a fighter pilot. A number of pilots — part of the crew that gave us good support throughout the Salerno operation — had landed from time to time on a hastily prepared strip south of the Sele river. One of them on that day was Captain Jacob R. Hamilton, who was on a tactical reconnaissance flight. He volunteered to carry my letter to Sicily, and was given maps which would show Ridgway exactly where to drop his men. Hamilton took off immediately for Licata, in Sicily.

Meanwhile, I got busy with messages and orders designed to relieve the situation at the front, where the enemy attacks continued on an increasingly strong scale. Ironically, we heard a broadcast over the BBC which suggested that Montgomery's Eighth Army was dashing up the Italian boot to our rescue. The BBC was about all our men on the Salerno beach-head could get on their radios, and such broadcasts, naturally, I suppose, presented the news with a strong British slant. This eventually proved pretty irritating at times, particularly as the Eighth Army was making a slow advance towards Salerno, despite Alexander's almost daily efforts to prod it into greater speed.

Later, General Dawley telephoned me and reported that the Germans had broken through the Persano sector and were fanning out in our rear areas. It was the first word I had had that such a critical situation had developed at that point.

'What are you doing about it?', I asked. 'What can you do?'

'Nothing', he replied. 'I've no reserves. All I've got is a prayer.'

That was the beginning of a couple of days of real nightmare for me and a lot of other people. What had happened was that Kesselring had sent a strong attack, led by tanks against both flanks of the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, at Persano, where our line ran along the Sele river. In mid-afternoon, German tanks hit the battalion on the left flank and others, followed by elements of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 71 and supported by towed artillery, hit the right flank. The fighting was intense for a couple of hours, after which German tanks slipped down a defile, caught our men by surprise, temporarily trapped the battalion headquarters and eventually forced our lines back enough to let the main German force across the Sele river.

The enemy column divided at Persano, one part of it striking north-east against the 2nd Battalion, 143rd Infantry, which simultaneously was hit by a German attack from the opposite flank and soon became completely isolated. The main enemy thrust from Persano, however, was due south about two miles towards the Burned Bridge. In effect, Kesselring was now pushing forward the spear which had been thrust into the centre of our beach-head perimeter, and he might well drive it clear to the sea, splitting the American and British sectors. He had, furthermore, picked the sector where we were least able to meet such an attack.

Late in the afternoon, the Germans pressed steadily along the dusty road towards the Burned Bridge, while their artillery moved into Persano to support the advance, and their infantry made heavy attacks on both sides of the gap to preclude any hope of closing it in time to cut them off. At 6.30 p.m., 15 Nazi tanks reached the heavy underbrush on the north side of the Calore river, where its juncture with the Sele formed the bottom of the Sele–Calore corridor adjacent to the Burned Bridge.

At this point, we were almost certainly at the mercy of Kesselring, provided he massed his strength and threw it at us relentlessly. It is possible that he never realised his opportunity, or that he feared a trap, but, considering merely the logic of the situation, it would have been agreed by any military expert that we didn't have much with which to stop him. Well, that's not quite true. There were some military men in the path of the German tank spearhead who would not have agreed. They were the men of the 189th Field Artillery Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Hal. L. Muldrow, junior, and the 158th Field Artillery Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Russell D. Funk, both from the 45th Division.

Last stand at the Burned Bridge. Having gained a foothold in the Sele-Calore corridor, the Germans tanks, assault guns and half-tracks determinedly drove southwards down the narrow passage until they reached the junction of the two rivers near what the Americans called the 'Burned Bridge', a timber-piled bridge over the Calore named so because it had been on fire when the first American troops had forded the river here three days earlier.

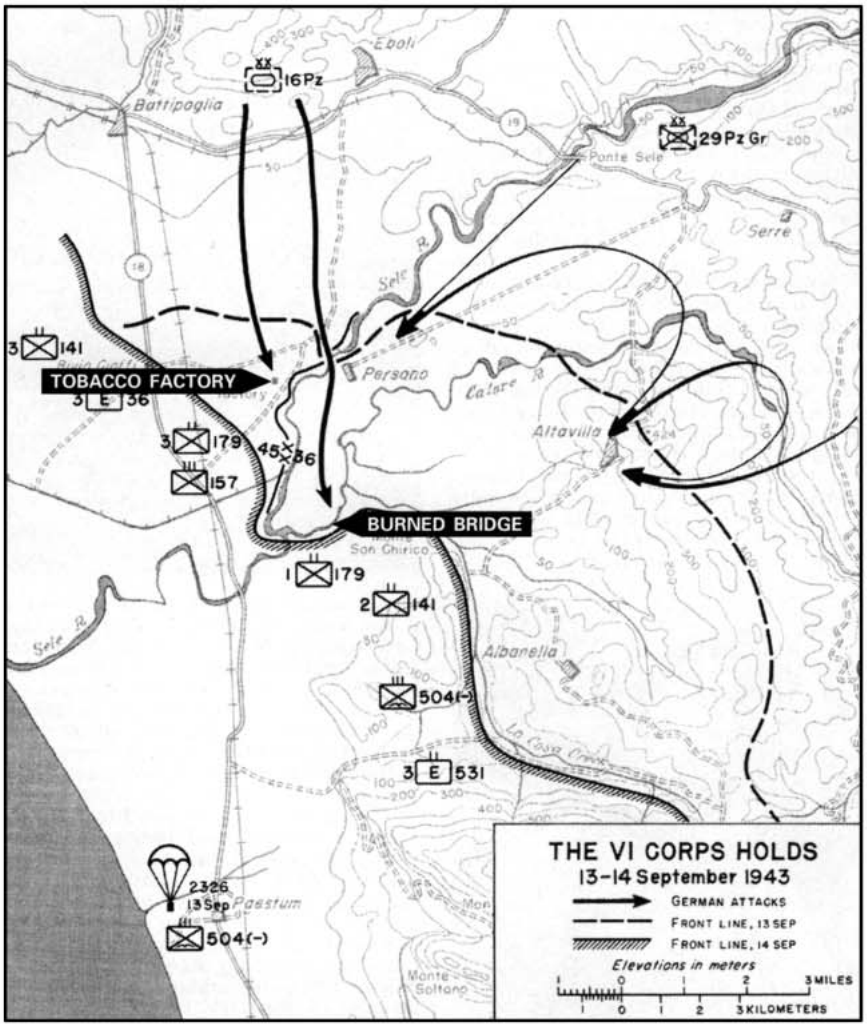
The two battalions were on the south bank of the Calore, where a gentle slope runs down to the Burned Bridge. They stripped their gun crews to a minimum and sent men down that slope with rifles and machine guns to dig in. They posted six 37mm guns to support the men. They went out on the near-by roads and began stopping trucks, Jeeps, and everything else that came along. Every soldier who got out of the vehicles was given a gun and put in the line. They collected an emergency reserve of mechanics and truck drivers to go into action at any point where a break was threatened.

There was a hill on their flank that might have offered the enemy a vantage point; but by the time I had discovered the immediate situation, there were no troops left to take it over, so I ordered a regimental band to be armed and sent there immediately. The hill hadn't any name, and there was some confusion about designating it until I pointed it out and told them to call it Piccolo Peak, because there was nobody there but the musicians.

By this time, the German tanks were firing on the positions of the 189th Field Artillery Battalion in preparation for crossing the Calore near the Burned Bridge; and by this time, too, the sweating, dust-coated men of the two battalions were ready. They opened up with everything they had.

The ford beside the bridge and the road leading to it simply went up in dust. The fields and woods in which the enemy tanks took cover were pulverised. When the Germans tried to fight their way across the ford, the fire laid down by everybody from the artillerymen to the piccolo player knocked them back on their heels. At one time, the two battalions were firing eight rounds per minute per gun, and they acted as if they could keep it up all night, if necessary and some one passed the ammunition.

After several unsuccessful thrusts, the enemy column wavered and began to fall back. By sunset, the two battalions had fired 3,650 rounds, and seven guns of Battery B, 27th Armoured Field Artillery, had arrived in time to fire another 300 rounds. A few minutes later, the Germans were in full retreat from the Burned Bridge, and the artillery was feeling fine. I was feeling somewhat better myself, although I knew that we were far from being out of the wood.



Here, the 158th and 189th Field Artillery Battalions (45th Division), firing their 105mm guns over open sights from across the river, stopped the enemy. Reinforcements were rushed to the site: part of the 636th TD Battalion; the 36th Division band; drivers, cooks and clerks from the Army Command Post; and anyone else whom Generals Clark and Walker could scrape together. This was the hour of crisis in the bridgehead. Except for this stout-hearted few, there was no one else between the Germans and the sea, only five miles away. Virtually every man was in the line, and there were no reserves.

As the battle raged around the Tobacco Factory and the Burned Bridge in the valley below, another crucial fight was taking place around the hillside village of Altavilla. From its position on one of the foothills, Altavilla completely dominated the Sele and Calore valleys in the plain below. *Right:* This is the view from the village of the south-western half of the Salerno plain. Altavilla itself was fully dominated by two heights above it, Hills 424 and 315. The 1st Battalion of the 142nd first took the village and Hill 424 with deceptive ease on D+2 (September 11), only to be driven off the hill with heavy casualties next day by freshly-arrived troops of II. Abteilung of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 15 (29. PG-Division), who had infiltrated during the night. On the 13th, the Americans tried again, the 3rd Battalion, 143rd, succeeding in retaking the village, but the 3rd Battalion, 142nd, failing to capture Hill 424. That same afternoon, both battalions were fiercely counter-attacked and, despite assistance from the already-depleted 1st Battalion, 142nd, had to withdraw down the hill.

It was at Altavilla that Corporal Charles E. Kelly of Company L, 143rd Infantry, *(left)* won the Medal of Honor. Twice on September 13, he joined a patrol that located and neutralised enemy machine gun positions. When the 3rd Battalion got hemmed in at Altavilla, cut off from the rest of the division, Kelly and others entrenched themselves in a house. When the Germans attacked next morning, he took a position at a window, where earlier several of his buddies had been killed, and fired his automatic rifle until it locked from overheating. This he repeated with another gun. He then picked up 60mm mortar shells, pulled the safety pins and used the shells as grenades, dropping them on the enemy below. When the house had to be given up later on the 14th, he volunteered to cover the retreat and successfully did so with a bazooka, then made good his own escape. After the war, Kelly wrote a book about his exploits, ***One Man's War***, which was serialised in the ***Saturday Evening Post***. He died on January 11, 1985. (RIOD) *Right:* The house defended by Kelly and others of 3rd Battalion, 143rd Infantry.

Left: **Combat engineers of the 142nd Infantry patrol the contested village.** *Right:* **The alley is today called Vico Burgo San Martino.**

To cope with the emergency situation, Clark on the 13th asked the 82nd Airborne Division to drop a regiment of paratroopers into the bridgehead at short notice. The 504th Parachute Infantry dropped two battalions near Paestum that same night, followed by the 505th Parachute Infantry the next night, September 14/15. The 325th Glider Infantry landed by ship on the 15th. *Right:* **Here, Clark speaks to a group of 82nd men to express his gratitude for their timely arrival. (USNA)**

When I got back to my headquarters, it was obvious that we had narrowly escaped disaster that day, and that we were still in a difficult position all round the front. On the north, or British, sector the enemy had infiltrated in the direction of Maiori, and the situation was critical round Vietri Pass with reinforcements needed at once. But it was on the American sector that we had suffered most and were most urgently in need of reorganisation before we could withstand another attack. Elements of the 142nd and 143rd RCTs had been thrown back from Altavilla; Company K of the 143rd was cut off; the 1st Battalion of the 142nd had lost all but 60 of its men; the 2nd Battalion, 143rd, had been beaten up in the Sele–Calore corridor and lost 508 officers and men; and the 157th's 1st Battalion had been badly bruised west of Persano, where the Germans had seized the key tobacco-factory buildings on high ground.

We spent the night reorganising, and pulled back our lines to tighten our defences. There was only one encouraging factor. Hamilton had returned from his trip to Licata, where he had delivered my message to Ridgway. Actually, Ridgway had left the field in a C-47 just before Hamilton arrived but the pilot dashed up to the tower and got them to call the general's plane, explaining that he had an important message from me. Ridgway came back at once, and after a couple of hours' study sent Hamilton back to Salerno with the message I had expected — 'Can do.' Hamilton landed on our makeshift strip and took a Jeep ride to my headquarters, but when eight strafing enemy planes flew along the road he was forced to dive out of the Jeep and dislocated his shoulder. He flew his own plane back to Sicily, however, after delivering Ridgway's message.

About the same time, I received urgent messages from Ridgway and Alexander saying that not only would the 82nd Airborne troops be landed inside our lines, but that the drop previously scheduled for Avellino would also be carried out the next night in order to harass the enemy's rear.

'Vitally important', Ridgway emphasised, 'that all ground and naval forces in your zone and in Gulf of Salerno, respectively, be directed to hold fire tonight. Rigid control of anti-aircraft fire is absolutely essential for success.'

I replied that orders had been issued, but, just to be sure, I sent staff officers to every battery to be certain that all fire was halted at midnight, the hour set for the drop. I knew that Ridgway's men had been fired on by Allied gunners and had suffered losses during the invasion of Sicily and I didn't want it to happen again. At the scheduled hour, every gun on the beach-head was silent. Then we could hear the roar of planes coming — but it was the wrong kind of a roar, and coming from the wrong direction! Just at that moment, the Germans had chosen to make a raid! For five minutes, they roared up and down the beach strafing and bombing; not a gun fired on them. We just sat there and took it.

Five minutes later — just ten minutes behind schedule — the American transports came over the beaches, and the men of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, under Colonel Reuben H. Tucker, a real fighting soldier, shot down through the darkness to join our badly battered defence lines. By the next morning, they were in action on the Altavilla sector, where they lived up to their fine reputation.

To avoid the paratroop planes being shot at by their own anti-aircraft guns, as had happened at Sicily, all Allied flak crews were given strict instructions not to fire during the time of the droppings, and special officers were sent to each battery to enforce the orders. *Centre left:* **This 20 mm Bofors gun has taken up position along the coastal road between Salerno and Vietri. (IWM)**

In the British sector, the 201st Guards Brigade (56th Division) had on D+3 withdrawn from the Battipaglia salient to a shorter line about a mile to the rear. At midnight on September 13/14, a force of tanks and half-tracks from Kampfgruppe Stempel of the 16. Panzer-Division attacked the 3rd Coldstream Guards near the so-called Fosso Bridge across the Tusciano river. The leading vehicle was across the bridge before anyone realised it was German (the Guards had been expecting one of their own patrols to return), but it was quickly knocked out by Sergeant Jackson with a Piat.

The next day was September 14, and all day the German attacks continued in strength against our new defence lines, which had been drastically shortened and reorganised during the night. The 36th Division was subjected to new enemy onslaughts, and the 45th Division, holding a line west of the Sele river, was under heavy attack along the sector where, by our realignment, we had closed the gap between the American and British forces. In the British sector, the 46th Division dug in on the hills round the town of Salerno; the 56th Division was in an open plain south-east of Battipaglia, where the enemy had excellent observation of its movements and was able to send repeated tank thrusts against the Coldstream Guards of the 201st Guards Brigade and the 9th Royal Fusiliers of the 167th Infantry Brigade.

Early in the day, following a conference with General Dawley at 7 a.m., Sergeant Holden drove me by jeep, with my aide, Captain Warren Thrasher, to the front sectors. We drove along the highway to a small road that ran parallel to the south bank of the Sele, and thence followed the front line eastward at the critical point where the German breakthrough of the day before had been finally halted. We stopped at points where small units had been posted on the shortened front line; it was evident that officers and men had taken a severe drubbing and were tired. Everywhere we stopped, I talked to as many of the men as possible, telling them that the situation had improved, reinforcements were arriving, and that this was where we stopped giving ground.

'There mustn't be any doubt in your minds', I said. 'We don't give another inch. This is it. Don't yield anything. We're here to stay.'

There was plenty of spirit left in the men when they understood the situation, and I felt that they would be equal to the order of the day, to hang on, which I had issued earlier.

At one point we went forward to a hill near the spot where our most forward elements were dug in. Climbing to the top of the hill, I studied the rough terrain ahead of us in the hope of finding some of our forces still hanging on in that sector. There were no such hopeful signs, but I did see 18 tanks beginning to infiltrate our lines. For a moment, I hoped that they were ours, but, studying them through binoculars, I soon discovered that they were German. It was also obvious that they had found a weak spot in our lines, and that if they were merely the spearhead of a big tank attack we were again in the utmost danger of being split apart and crushed. Anxiously I searched the rear area for indications of other tank columns. I couldn't see any — but that didn't mean that they were not there. I could not imagine that Kesselring would fail to exploit this opportunity to rush up powerful armour and break through to the sea.

We hurried back to our own lines and called up an anti-tank unit that I had previously seen there and an engineer unit that was not far away. They were able to get into favourable positions quickly, and laid down a heavy fire that turned back the 18 tanks. I still can't understand why such an able general as Kesselring failed to carry through on that occasion with a stronger attack force, or why he used his plentiful armour — he originally had probably 600 tanks at Salerno — in piecemeal fashion at critical stages of the battle. I can't understand it, but I can be thankful for it. Looking back, I often feel that this lapse on the part of Kesselring was all that saved us from disaster.

At another point on the day's journey, I passed a line of trucks coming back from the front sector, and noticed that the men were wearing gas masks. At first, I thought that some of the drivers were wearing their masks

Both the Coldstreams and Grenadiers then, from positions along the dike, opened up a deadly barrage on the German AFVs milling about, disabling many of them, and the attack faded out. Next morning, Sergeant Mott arrived to photograph one of the Coldstreams' 6-pounders and the SdKfz 251 half-track knocked out by it.

The same spot today. There exists some confusion over the names Fosso and Fosso Bridge. The bridge so named by the British was actually across the Tusciano; whereas the Fosso (literally: 'ditch') was in fact an irrigation canal leading into that river. The small bridge on the right (see the aerial on page 14) is in fact crossing the Fosso, but located about 500 yards west of the British 'Fosso Bridge'.

Allied casualties in the first days of the Salerno battle were heavy. A soldier belonging to VI Corps stands erect as men of the 36th Division lower the body of a fallen buddy into a grave near Paestum. Although taken on September 11, this picture by Lieutenant Benson was not released by the American censor until April 12, 1945. (USNA)

because of the extreme dustiness, but when I saw that all of them had on masks I stopped the first truck and asked the driver why.

'Gas!', he exclaimed, motioning back towards the front. It flashed through my mind that there had been a long argument before the Italian invasion as to whether the men should take their gas masks ashore, since it usually happened that in action they threw them away or 'lost' them in order to lighten their packs.

'Where's the gas?', I asked. 'Who said so?'

'Somewhere up front', he said. 'I don't know who said so.'

Since there obviously wasn't any gas round us at the time, I made them take off their masks, and later discovered that it was, as I had expected, a false alarm. Since everybody was on edge at the time, it was the kind of rumour that could easily spread and cause serious trouble.

My tour of the front ended with the 157th and 179th Regimental Combat Teams of the 45th Division. These troops had been in the Sicilian campaign and were doing a fine job. They were well led by Major General Troy H. Middleton, the divisional commander. They had good liaison with their artillery, and in the period of an hour that morning had knocked out 13 enemy tanks. We were under artillery and small-arms fire most of the time we were talking to the men of these two regiments; but they went about their jobs in workmanlike fashion, and I had every confidence that they would stand their ground. They did. And so did other units all along the front, where the enemy had been turned back time after time in desperate fighting.

Though the power lines should have been an easy clue, it took Karel quite some time to find the location of this picture. It was taken on the east side of the Paestum station railway crossing (see map on page 9). The house in the background is in fact a railway house, No. 21/204.

On D-Day, work began on the construction of a landing ground just north of Paestum. Speed was essential for, though the Montecorvino airfield was captured on September 10, it lay under enemy shelling and would remain unusable until the 20th. The Paestum strip came into partial use on September 11: 26 Seafires from the Fleet Air Arm's seaborne Force V and P-38 Lightnings from Sicily used it to refuel and rearm, the Seafires using it as land base after the aircraft carriers were withdrawn on the 12th. On the 13th, two P-51 Mustangs of the 111th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron landed, but departed that same day to bring General Clark's request for an immediate airborne drop to General Ridgway in Sicily. However, half of the 111th arrived on the 15th and a Kittyhawk squadron of the US 33rd Fighter Group on the 16th. *Above:* **A Seafire lands at Paestum. The wrecked German tank is one of those knocked out on D-Day. (USNA)**

We were getting excellent air support throughout the day, with big-scale attacks against German formations and heavy bombing of their supply lines, troop concentrations, and dumps. British warships also moved up close to fire their 15-inch guns at enemy positions, with devastating effect. On the night of the 14th, reinforcements arrived by air and by sea and the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion dropped near Avellino, under command of Lieutenant Colonel Doyle R. Yardley, to strike at the German rear lines. Yardley was wounded, but the unit did a wonderful job. Since it was not possible for us to advance immediately to make contact with them, I was criticised for carrying out such a hazardous operation as the Avellino drop, which was the first one made behind the enemy lines. It was true that it appeared for a while that the 509th suffered heavy losses. Very few of the men got through to our lines, but they turned out to be capable soldiers, and hid in the hills in small groups, often with the aid of Italian families. They made many raids that seriously disrupted the German communications, and within two months 80 per cent of the battalion was safely back within the American lines. Considering the hazards of merely existing on the Salerno beach-head at that time, the mission of the 509th paid off with big dividends.

The hills in the distance help to identify the same field today.

That night, after about 48 hours in which I hadn't taken off my clothes, I began to feel that we would pull out of the hole into which we had fallen. It was a help, too, to get a letter from Eisenhower in which he said:

'We know you are having a sticky time, but you may be sure that everybody is working at full speed to provide the reinforcements you need. . . . In the meantime don't forget that we have an Air Force that is more than anxious to do its full part in your support. I hope that your bomb-line [line designated to avoid bombing our own troops] will be drawn as accurately as possible along your

Another view of the Paestum airfield. Note the crashed P-38 in the foreground. A second landing ground was completed near the Tusciano river on the 12th, and two more, near the Sele and near Asa, on the 13th. (USNA)

As a result of the crisis in the beach-head, the Allied Northwest African Strategic Air Force was directed to attack areas immediately in front of the beach-head in direct tactical support of the ground forces. One of the targets was the road and rail centre of Eboli. Wellingtons had already dropped 77 tons on the town on the night before D-Day, but the day and night attacks by the heavy and medium bombers during September 14-15 all but obliterated the town. (USNA) *Below:* **This is Eboli's main square, then named Piazza Franceso Spiritu and now the Piazza Repubblica.**

front, so that our Air Force can continue to disrupt the forces trying to concentrate against you. You and your people have done a magnificent job. We are all proud of you, and since the success of the whole operation depends upon you and your forces, you need have no fear that anything will be neglected in providing you with all possible assistance.'

It is difficult now to describe how important it was at that time to receive such a message and to know that we could count on the unqualified support of all that it was possible for Ike to throw into the battle. We were in a pinch, but in the pinch the Allied forces didn't let any ordinary considerations or differences of opinion stand in the way of unlimited co-operative action. Ike stated it well in his letter; Alexander made the same idea clear in his messages to me; and all branches of the armed services — British and American — made it evident in their contributions to the battle of Salerno.

Left: **Just south-west of Eboli, a railway viaduct has been blasted and a German half-track completely wrecked. It is difficult to say whether this destruction was the result of aerial bombing or of naval shelling, since this particular road between Eboli and Battipaglia was also the target of ships' guns on September 14. (USNA)** *Right:* **Today, a new motorway runs north of the railway, and this old section of Highway 19 south of the railway is now a dead-end road.**

On September 15, General Harold Alexander, the Allied ground commander in Italy, toured the beach-head with General Clark. Here, they observe the terrain with General McCreery of X Corps (on left, with beret) and Major-General John 'Ginger' Hawkesworth of 46th Division (in shorts, facing camera). Both the latter had only assumed their commands shortly before the Salerno operation, both as a result of rather unfortunate circumstances: McCreery had to take over X Corps after Lieutenant-General Brian Horrocks was seriously wounded in an air raid on Bizerta in June; Hawkesworth took over 46th Division on August 23, just two weeks before the invasion, after Major-General Harold Freeman-Attwood had been removed from command because he had committed a breach of security. In a letter to his wife from North Africa, Freeman had written: 'I hope I shall be drinking champagne somewhere in Italy on our wedding day' (which was September 10). This slight breach was picked up by the censor and, in an effort to tighten security, chosen to provide an example to others. Freeman was relieved, ordered back to Britain and, on arrival at the War Office, arrested. (IWM)

Alexander, accompanied by Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham, the commander of the Northwest African Tactical Air Force, arrived from Bizerta on a destroyer on September 15, and came to my headquarters for breakfast. I had set up a mess for my staff and for the British and French officers attached to it, but shortly afterwards I decided that the arrangement was not satisfactory from my point of view. It gave me little time to myself, and little chance to get away from the heavy pressure of work, so I arranged for Sergeant Chaney to prepare my meals at my trailer office. This system I continued throughout the Italian campaign. Chaney was a good cook, and I could invite a friend or two whenever I chose, or be alone when I felt like it. Or we could, when necessary, serve a meal for the King, Churchill, or Ike — and Chaney did it for those distinguished people.

Alexander appeared to be satisfied that we had overcome the crisis created by Kesselring's counter-attacks, and that we could soon take the offensive towards Naples. We visited Dawley's headquarters, and later went by PT boat to McCreery's sector, where we visited parts of the front and got a good look at the rugged area in which the British 46th Division, under Major-General John L. I. Hawkesworth, was still engaged in bitter fighting south-east of Salerno.

The group photo was taken at the village of Mercatello, just east of Salerno on Highway 18, the overhead wire posts on the viaduct making for a perfect match. The sea at this point is only some 400 yards to the right.

Left: **While McCreery and Alexander observe the fighting in the hills to the east, Clark looks the other way. (A man known for his vanity and taste for publicity, Clark would only permit photographs to be taken from his 'good side' — his left; American photographers were duly instructed but, with a British photographer, as in this case, Clark would have to make sure himself.) After his visit, Alexander reported to Eisenhower: 'Although I am not entirely happy about present situation, I am happier than I was 24 hours ago. Troops are tired but on the whole in good heart.' (IWM)** *Right:* **At first sight, this appears to be the same viaduct as in the previous picture, but it is in fact another one, a little closer to Salerno.**

In the aftermath of the beach-head crisis occurred one of the saddest episodes, not just in the history of the Salerno campaign, but in the whole history of the British Army: a mass mutiny. On September 20, some 300 replacement troops, part of a group of 1,500 who had arrived from Tripoli on the 16th, sat down on the beach and three times refused explicit orders to report to their assigned units. Most of the mutineers were Scotsmen, veterans of the 51st Highland and 50th Northumbrian Divisions, several of them decorated for bravery in North Africa and Sicily, who had been convalescing in hospital while their parent divisions were returned to Britain. The root of the problem was that their officers had failed to explain clearly to them that they were being sent to Salerno to help solve a crisis situation, not as ordinary replacements. To the men it appeared as if their officers had broken a promise to rotate them to Britain and back to their own regiments. Called to the scene, McCreery, the corps commander, personally addressed the men and managed to persuade some of them to obey, but 192 persisted in their rebellion. They were arrested and put in a cage (next to one with German PoWs), sent back to Constantine on the 22nd, and court-martialled, the three sergeants who had led the strike being sentenced to death, others receiving sentences of seven to ten years penal servitude; all were later given a chance to 'retrieve their honour' by returning to duty in Italy, but by then they were so demoralised that many later deserted. Though already reported by Hugh Bond in his 1961 book *Salerno*, the Salerno Mutiny remains little-known and something many would rather forget. The British Official History, published in 1973, fails even to mention it. The exact place on the beach where the mutiny occurred is unrecorded, and our picture just shows British replacement troops arriving at Salerno. (USNA)

Now I had time to give attention to a matter which had bothered me during the Salerno battle. It concerned Dawley. After consultation with Alexander we were in accord that a change in command of VI Corps was necessary. I had taken steps to put General Ridgway in as deputy to Dawley in order to be of the maximum possible assistance. When Ike came to Salerno a couple of days later, I reported the situation to him. He concurred with my views that a change would be in the best interest of all concerned, and said that he would arrange for Major General John P. Lucas to replace Dawley. By that time, the immediate crisis on the beach-head was resolved and, on September 20, I informed Dawley of the situation, relieved him of command, and directed him to report to Eisenhower.

Meanwhile, I had received several letters by courier from Montgomery detailing his progress up the coast towards our beach-head, and suggesting, on September 15, that 'perhaps you could push out a reconnaissance along the road from Agropoli to meet my people, who have already started from Sapri. . . . It looks as if you may be having not too good a time, and I do hope that all will go well with you. We are on the way to lend a hand, and it will be a great day when we actually join hands.'

I replied: 'It will be a pleasure to see you again at an early date. Situation here well in hand.' But in view of the fact that we had narrowly escaped being pushed into the sea I didn't mention his optimistic idea of sending out a reconnaissance party.

On September 16, I radioed to Ike, giving him some details of the rapidly changing situation and explaining how the force of the German counter-attack had hit the 36th Division. I added:

'We are in good shape now. We are here to stay. This morning we have restored the salient between the Sele river and the Calore. I am reinforcing Darby's force [on our left flank in the Sorrento region]. Darby has done his usual grand job and I recommend that he be promoted to the grade of colonel. . . . I am prepared to attack Naples. We have made mistakes, and we have learned the hard way, but we will improve every day, and am sure we will not disappoint you.'

I then reported the first total of casualties in approximately a week of fighting. It showed that the British X Corps, which had

Due to the crisis on the 13th, the Americans had been forced to abandon attempts to recapture Altavilla, and had withdrawn their troops to a better defendable line along the La Cosa creek. On the evening of September 16, the newly-arrived 504th Parachute Infantry renewed the attack on the Altavilla position. After a long, arduous uphill march, the paratroopers attacked, but were unable to recapture Hills 315 and 424 or the village. Pinned down by intense and accurate artillery fire, they had to stay crouched in their foxholes on the rocky slopes all day and night of the 17th and most of the 18th, until the Germans gave up and evacuated Altavilla. The town finally taken, Major General Matthew B. Ridgway, the commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, and at Clark's request acting as deputy commander of VI Corps, talks to Lieutenant Robert N. Ives of the 36th Division staff on Altavilla's main square. Behind Ridgway is his Jeep driver, Staff Sergeant Frank G. Farmer. (USNA)

performed so well against the hardest blows Kesselring could strike, had suffered 531 killed, 1,915 wounded, and 1,561 missing. The American VI Corps, with a little more than half as many men engaged as the British, had lost 225 killed, 853 wounded, and 589 missing. Most of those listed as missing in both corps later turned up safely.

Alexander returned to my headquarters on September 21, when he outlined future plans for the 15th Army Group. Running his finger along the map of Italy, he indicated a boundary between my Fifth Army and Montgomery's Eighth Army. The Fifth Army was to seize Naples, without pause cross the Volturno river, and work up the western side of the mountainous peninsula, while Montgomery advanced along the eastern side. Polish, French, Italian, and other units were to join our offensive; it appeared that we would have about 14 divisions, which would probably be slightly more than the number of German divisions opposing us.

By the following day, it was apparent that the Germans were withdrawing and that we would be opposed principally by strong delaying tactics in the advance through the mountain passes to Naples. On that day, we also received the first of the censorship guidance instructions, which henceforth came daily from 15th Army Group headquarters. These instructions laid down the broad outline for our daily communiqués, specifying which towns might be mentioned and indicating the general line to be followed for security reasons. They often reflected political factors too, particularly with reference to the units of various nationalities which were being collected in our army group. On this occasion, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Clark, the Fifth Army public relations officer, showed me a cable that said: 'First, play up the Eighth Army progress henceforth. Second, the Fifth Army is pushing the enemy back on his right flank. Americans may be mentioned. There should be no suggestion that the enemy has made good his getaway.'

When men have just been through a bruising battle such as the Fifth Army had experienced, it is difficult for them to understand the reasons, if there are any, for instructions to play down their activities and play up the operations of some one else. It wasn't easy for me to understand either, particularly

Many of the American maintenance, supply and medical services in the beach-head had been set up around the ancient settlement of Paestum (see map on page 9). Headquarters of the US 480th Port Battalion was located in the Greek Temple of Neptune, built in the 5th Century B.C. and one of the best-preserved temples in all of Europe. (USNA) *Below:* **A timeless comparison if ever there was one.**

HQ Company of the 480th — a unit composed of black Americans in the then still segregated US Army — has set up office inside the temple. At the desks (front to rear): Sergeants James Shellman, Gilbert A. Terry, John W. Phoenix, Curtis A. Richardson and Leslie B. Wood. In front: Tech/Sergeant Gordon A. Scott, Master Sergeant Walter C. Jackson, Sergeant David D. Jones and Warrant Officer Carlyle M. Tucker. (USNA)

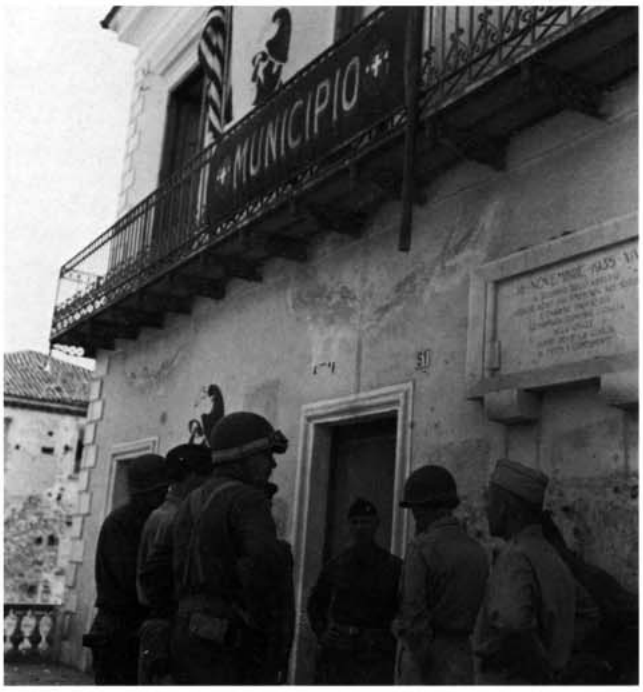
Another unit set up at Paestum was the US 93rd Evacuation Hospital. On September 15, Lieutenant Benson pictured a truck-load of nurses arriving to begin work at the 93rd Evac. (USNA)

The gate, part of the old city walls of the ancient Etruscan settlement of Paestum, is the Porta Sirena, on the eastern side of the town near the present-day railway station.

when we were all ready to resume our drive into rugged terrain, where we were certain to have difficult going in spite of the enemy withdrawal. Such instructions, however, became a regular part of the campaign, and on many occasions we had a hard time writing a communiqué within the limitations laid down for security or other reasons.

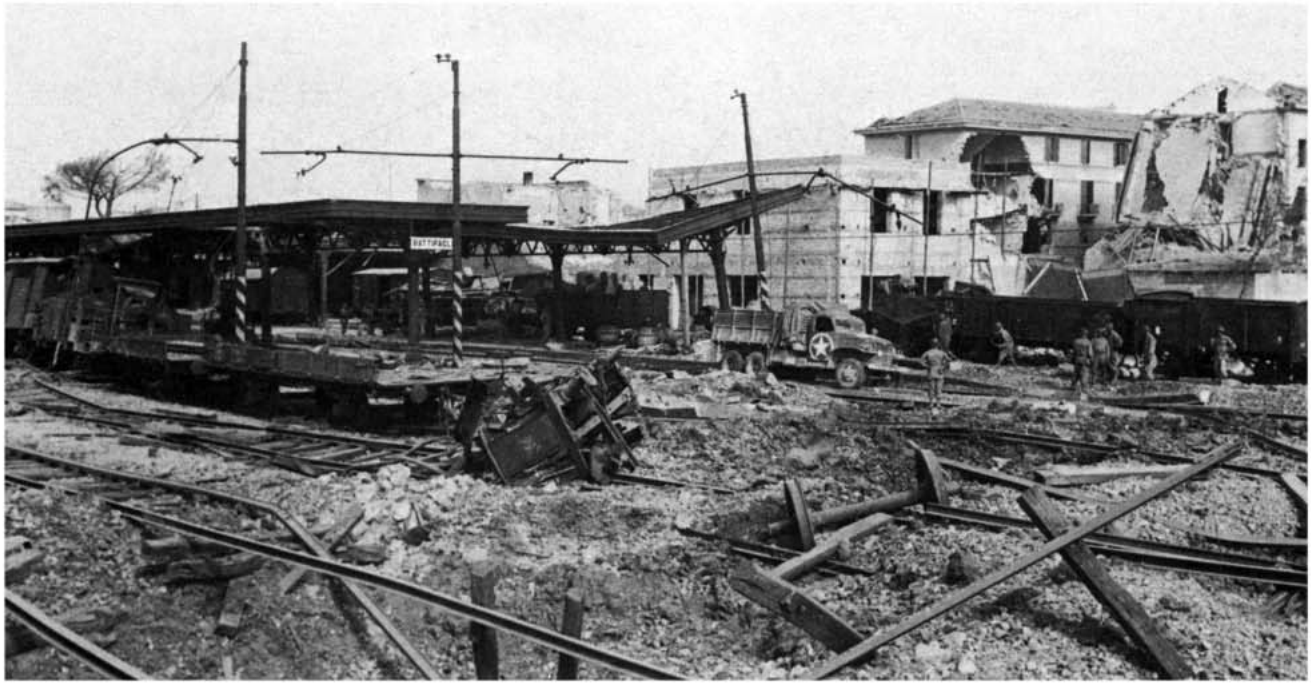
A day or two later, Brigadier General Fred A. Blesse, chief surgeon of the North African Theatre of Operations, visited my headquarters, and I had an opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the admirable manner in which the medical services performed at Salerno. Prior to the invasion, there had been a difference of opinion between the British and Americans over whether nurses should be landed on the beach-head. The British were opposed to it, but I decided that when the American hospitals went in the nurses should go too. They did, and under the most difficult conditions they carried out their jobs like veterans. The hospital units were landed, set up, and receiving patients in the minimum amount of time, and the presence of the nurses and their Red Cross colleagues was an invaluable morale booster throughout the Italian campaign.

In his account, General Clark comments about the difference between the US and British with regard to employing females near the front. The Americans had no qualms about having nurses, like these ones wading ashore from LCI 242, serving in the beach-head. (RIOD)



Agropoli, eight miles south of Paestum, was the southernmost anchor of the beach-head. It was also the fist town in Italy where the Allied Military Government (AMGOT) set up administration. *Left:* **Here, AMGOT officers gather in front of the Municipal Hall, still decorated with a portrait of the Duce. The helmeted man on the right is Colonel Edgar Erskine Hume, the Military Governor. In October, after the capture of Naples, he would become chief of Allied Military Government of that city. (USNA)** *Above:* **Although only the balcony railing remains unchanged, this is the same building on Via Filippo Patella.**

By September 20, when this picture was taken on the Paestum beach, the fight for the Salerno beach-head was won. On the 18th, the Germans had begun a planned withdrawal to the north and north-east (something which was confirmed by Ultra that same day). At the same time, the Allies were building up strength, the LCIs in this picture in fact bringing in the first troops of a fresh formation, the US 34th Division. Now the break-out towards Naples could begin. (USNA)



Above: **That same 18th, Battipaglia was finally occupied by the 201st Guards Brigade. Like Eboli, Battipaglia, and particularly its marshalling yards, had been severely bombed. Wellingtons dropped 77 tons of bombs on the night before D-Day, and fighter-bombers carried out further attacks during the day. Strategic bombers added their weight on September 14/15th, leaving the town and yards in complete shambles. (USNA)** *Right:* **To get a suitably-high standpoint for his comparison, Karel was stupid enough to climb on top of a parked goods train, unaware that the open power lines inches from his head could well electrocute him if touched. Ordered down by three furious Italian railway policemen, and unwilling to hand over his camera when told to, he was in for a shock when the trio without much ado proceeded to beat him up! Thus persuaded, in the end he got away by paying a multi-lire fine, after which he even got his camera back.**

Above: **Two days after the town's capture, General Clark, together with Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, the Allied supreme air commander in the Mediterranean, and Major General Edwin J. House, the commander of the US XII Air Support Command (both in the back of the Jeep), stop in Battipaglia to look at the destruction wrought by the air forces. (USNA)** *Below:* **The picture was taken in the centre of the town, on Via Roma, looking south-eastward.**

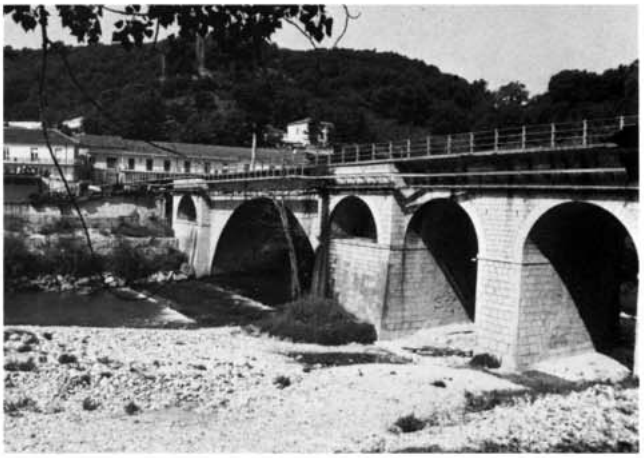
Left: **That same September 20, troops of the 3rd Battalion of the 30th Infantry (US 3rd Division) move out from Battipaglia to begin VI Corps' breakout from the beach-head. The 3rd Division had received orders for a hurried move from Sicily to Salerno on the 13th, at the height of the beach-head crisis, and had begun landing on the 18th. Now it was to undertake a wide sweep through the mountains to protect the right flank of X Corps moving on Naples. (USNA)** *Centre left:* **No sign of bomb damage on Via Olevano today. The hill in the background is Monte di Eboli.**

Our 30-mile advance to Naples was anything but easy. Cold rains made progress slow. Kesselring was a master of delaying tactics. His use of artillery was highly effective in the mountainous region through which we had to pass. Small rearguard detachments of motorised German infantry dug in their machine guns on important hillsides while their riflemen on higher ground forced us to make wide, time-consuming envelopments almost every mile of the way. As we did so, the enemy artillery harassed our columns. Often, one 88mm gun, properly placed, could deliver fire along an entire valley floor, and might not be knocked out for many hours. Mud added to our woes, and with trucks bogged down soldiers and pack mules had to move supplies over rugged hills. Blown bridges and mines were constant

Below and bottom: **Ten miles into the mountains, the 3rd Division's lead Intelligence & Recon Platoon came upon a blown bridge in a curve in the road, two miles south of the town of Acerno. The single-arch bridge spanned a 60-foot gorge, through which the Isca della Serra plunges into the 300-foot-deep valley of the Tusciano river. Moreover, the Germans commanded the curve by fire from machine gunners and riflemen placed on a hilltop across the valley. Yet, after Acerno had been taken, Company C of the division's 10th Combat Engineer Battalion in two days, September 22-23, constructed a two-storey, two-bent trestle span across the gap, 80 foot long and capable of carrying 18 tons. (USNA)**

Above: **Meanwhile, with the road blocked, the 30th Infantry had no option but to make a cross-country outflanking move, which took all of September 21. On the 22nd, while the 2nd Battalion attempted to cut the German escape route further north, the 3rd Battalion assaulted the town itself, reaching it after a stiff fight. However, most Germans had managed to pull out. Here, GIs of the 3rd Battalion advance past an abandoned 88mm gun. (USNA)**

Below left: **When *After the Battle* reader Gennaro Piccoli first matched this picture for us, on a rainy day back in 1976, the houses on the small square in the centre of Acerno still stood.**
Below right: **However, when Karel returned to Acerno in 1992 to retake the photograph, he found the square completely changed as a result of the earthquake which hit the region on November 23, 1980, and had laid most of Acerno in ruins. This is the same spot today.**



On the 3rd Division's right flank, the US 45th Division, advanced through equally mountainous terrain along Highway 91. Like its neighbour, it ran into opposition on the 21st, at Oliveto, and had to mount an outflanking attack before the town could be taken. Just south of Oliveto, near Bagni di Contursi, the Germans had demolished the bridge across the Temete, a tributary of the Sele. Fortunately for the 45th Division, the river at this time of year was not too difficult to ford. (USNA)

Meanwhile, on the 5th Army left flank, X Corps had finally fought its way across the mountain passes and down into the Plain of Naples, enabling the armour of the British 7th Armoured Division, led by Major-General G.W.J.E. Erskine (seen here with Clark near Salerno on September 29), to debouch toward Naples.

problems; each hillside became a small but difficult military problem that could be solved only by careful preparation and almost inevitably by the spilling of blood.

While this advance was in progress, Montgomery paid his first visit to my headquarters, and we discussed future operations. The Eighth Army commander said that his forces were greatly extended, and that their build-up of supplies was not sufficient to enable him to give any direct support to the Fifth Army as it swung westward towards Naples. He therefore planned to establish a supply base near Bari, but could not get moving before about October 1 towards the important Foggia airfields.

The British general was rather formal in his explanation but when he finished I said: 'The Fifth Army is just a young outfit trying to get along, while your Eighth Army is a battle-tried veteran. We would appreciate having you teach us some of your tricks.'

This apparently pleased Monty, and his visit went along after that on a very friendly and co-operative basis. When the newspapermen and photographers came round later he was in a good mood.

'We are going up Italy side by side', he said. 'Where we shall spend Christmas I don't know. A war correspondent wanted, however, to bet me five shillings that the war would be over by Christmas. I have taken his bet. He didn't say what year.'

By September 28, our preparations for the final thrust into Naples had been completed. Colonel Darby, on the Sorrento–Salerno ridge, was heavily reinforced by elements of the 82nd Airborne Division; and under the leadership of Ridgway the whole force broke out into the plain of Naples. The British X Corps at the same time drove into Castellammare, on the south coast of the Bay of Naples, and the following day worked their way round Mount Vesuvius.

Right: **German prisoners at Salerno on their way to PoW camp. Although the official caption dates this picture to D-Day, September 9, it seems more likely that it was taken a month later, since the Germans are said to have been captured in the Pompeii area. (USNA)**

Top: **On September 29, the 11th Hussars, leading the Desert Rats' advance in their armoured and scout cars, reached Pompeii, on the south-east side of Mount Vesuvius. (IWM)** *Above:* **Looking north-west at the crossing with Via Lepanto today.**

Above: **By now, Salerno harbour could be used to bring in troops and supplies. Here, American and British reinforcements converse with each other from two LCTs anchored side by side. (USNA)**
Right: **Our comparison was taken from the freighter *Volos I*, anchored in Salerno. Viaducts of the post-war Naples to Reggio di Calabria A3 motorway now dominate above the old coastal road to Vietri.**

On that day, Colonel Frank Knox, Secretary of the US Navy, visited our headquarters. I was pleased to see him, for he was the first visitor we had received from the States after our gruelling initiation into battle. He brought a message of encouragement from President Roosevelt, and told us that the people at home realised the difficulty of our mission and were proud of our accomplishments to date. This helped a lot. Soon thereafter, we received Général Alphonse Juin, in command of the French Expeditionary Corps that was to join the Fifth Army. On October 1, Juin and I drove up towards the front, working our way slowly towards Naples in the hope of seeing something of the action near the outskirts. We were surprised that we took so long to get to the forward elements, and eventually I discovered that we were in San Giovanni, on the southern outskirts of the city. There we met the British 23rd Armoured Brigade and General Ridgway, who told me that our leading elements had entered Naples.

Strangely enough, I found that this was embarrassing to me at the moment, because I wanted to enter the city, but did not feel that it would be politic to enter with General Juin at my side, in view of the fact that the French troops had not yet participated in the battle. I therefore had to leave Juin. Then I climbed into an armoured car and, with General Ridgway and an escort from the 82nd Airborne, drove into the city.

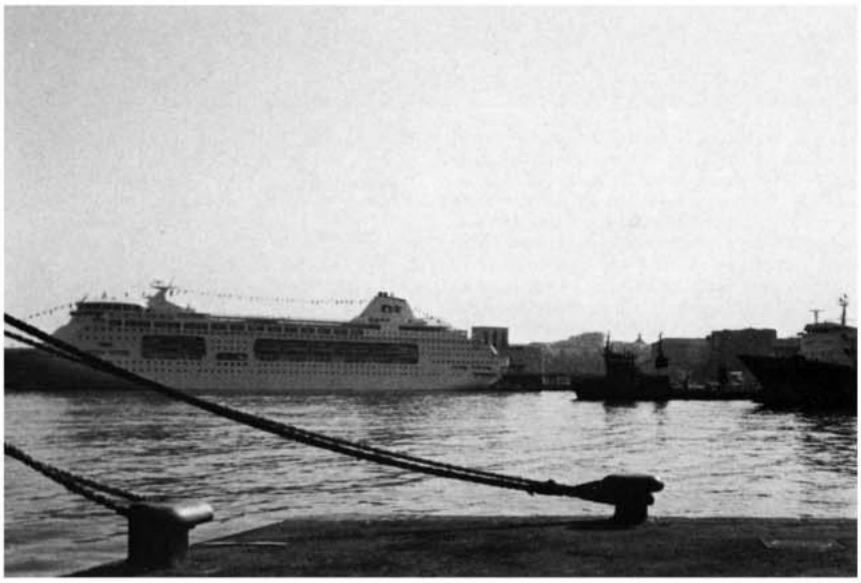
Left: **The gate of Salerno port today.**

After we captured the dominant peaks overlooking Naples, our final swoop down from the hills on to the plains had been rapid; and although the enemy had carried out tremendous destruction, he had been denied a chance to complete his work. Fortunately from my point of view, we had prepared ahead of time for the occupation. Some days earlier, we had been advised of a serious shortage of food and medical supplies in the city, and had made arrangements not only to cope with any trouble that might arise among the civilian population, but to alleviate their hardships as rapidly as possible.

It must be remembered that Naples was not only a great port which we vitally needed, but the first large city on the Continent, with a population of three-quarters of a million, to be wrested from the grip of the Germans. It was therefore particularly important that the Allied occupation should make a good impression, and that word of what was done should be spread to other cities still in enemy hands. Brigadier General Edgar Erskine Hume was made chief of the Allied Military Government in the city. Hume was a medical officer by profession, and an extremely energetic and able administrator, eminently well qualified to deal with the Italian authorities in the handling of the multitudinous duties involved in the rehabilitation of the great city. He established a hygiene department and a fire-fighter crew, particularly trained for emergencies such as enemy aerial bombardment. I recall that even before we left Africa we got a fire marshal from London to come down to Algiers to discuss the methods the British had devised for fighting incendiary bombs, so that we should be prepared for such emergencies when we occupied Naples. In addition, we had ships loaded with food, medical supplies, and all sorts of construction supplies and equipment waiting outside Naples harbour to move into the port as soon as the city was in our hands.

All these elaborate preparations were in my mind when I climbed into the armoured car at San Giovanni and started for the centre of the city. I had long looked forward to this trip. Certainly it was a hard-won victory, but there was little that was triumphant about our journey. There had been a German air raid just as we approached the city, and I was especially conscious of the wreckage as we moved along the streets. The port area could be described only as a mess. There was utter destruction of ships, docks, and warehouses, such as not even ancient Pompeii, through which we had passed earlier in the day, had ever seen.

Above: **Naples, the great prize, was finally entered on October 1. Allied bombing and German demolitions had caused great damage to the port, the Germans having blown piers and cranes, blocked access roads, ripped up port railways, and scuttled over 130 ships of all sizes at the piers and in the harbour. (RIOD)** *Below:* **The same view in Naples' western dock area, looking south-west from the Molo C. Pisacana today. The white building visible on the mole in the distance is the Stazione Marittima.**



However, US Army engineers and British and American naval groups, their work coordinated by the Fifth Army Base Section, immediately began the arduous work of repairing, clearing and salvaging. The 540th and 343rd Engineer Regiments cleared road and rail exits from the docks to the city. Navy divers, their work made difficult by the thick oil on the water and floating debris, worked on the underwater obstacles, while salvage crews removed the smaller sunken craft in order to open passageways to berthing spaces for ships waiting outside the harbour. *Left:* **Larger vessels that had been scuttled adjacent to quays were not removed but simply bridged over and made into piers. By October 3, the first exit routes were open and one day later the first berth for a Liberty ship was ready. Eventually, there were berths for 26 Liberty ships, 6 coasters and 11 LSTs. By October 15, the port was already unloading 3,500 tons of cargo daily, nearly half its pre-war capacity of 8,000 tons. By the end of the month, it was handling 7,000 tons a day. (USNA)**

On October 4, three days after his 'triumphal' entry into the city, General Mark Clark lands with his personal Piper cub plane, *Eleanor II*, on Naples' seafront boulevard. In his first test in battle as army commander, Clark had had a narrow escape and some very anxious moments at Salerno. However, though it had taken longer than anticipated, the main objective of the Salerno landings had been achieved: Fifth Army was now firmly ashore in Italy and had captured Naples. (USNA)

The same spot on Via Francesco Caracciolo today.

But after our first glimpse of the city, I became aware that there was something besides the wreckage that impressed me. I felt that I was riding through ghostly streets in a city of ghosts. We didn't see a soul. There were piles of debris in the streets; there were wrecked vehicles and burned-out houses; but there simply was nobody in the streets, with the exception of a few carabinieri.

We drove almost directly to the Place Garibaldi. The King's Dragoon Guards of the British X Corps had been the first to enter Naples about 9.30 in the morning, and the 82nd Airborne was already taking over police duties, but they had so far had very little contact with the population.

I made a quick survey of the area round the Place Garibaldi, and still saw hardly any Italians, but I was becoming conscious of the eyes that peeped out on us from behind the closed shutters of every house and every building. It was still like that as we drove out of Naples; I had a feeling that I had been seen by millions of persons, although I hardly glimpsed a civilian during the entire trip. It was an eerie sensation.

Before we left the city, I stopped long enough to send a message over the field radio that settled a small bet I had made with Major General Alfred M. Gruenther, my chief-of-staff, about the date we would capture Naples. It said: 'Am in centre of Naples. Ten bucks, please.'

Centre left: **Death and destruction by delayed fuse. On October 7, a time-bomb, one of several left behind by the Germans in buildings in the city, exploded in the Naples main post office on Via Monteoliveto, killing and injuring about 35 soldiers and an equal number of civilians. This is the scene immediately after the explosion. Four days later, another bomb in an Italian barracks occupied by the 307th Engineers of the 82nd Airborne Division killed 18 men and wounded 56. (RIOD)** *Left:* **The picture was in fact taken at the rear of the post office as seen from what is today Piazza Matteotti.**

Above: **The price of battle. On september 11, Lieutenant Benson pictured American soldiers digging graves for German soldiers killed in the first two days of the battle. (USNA)** *Below:* **The church still stands across the railway from Paestum.**

The first cemetery with German dead found by the Allies as they broke out of the beach-head was this graveyard located 'somewhere north of Eboli'. In all, the Germans had lost some 3,472 men in the Salerno battle: 840 killed, 2,002 wounded and 630 missing. (USNA)

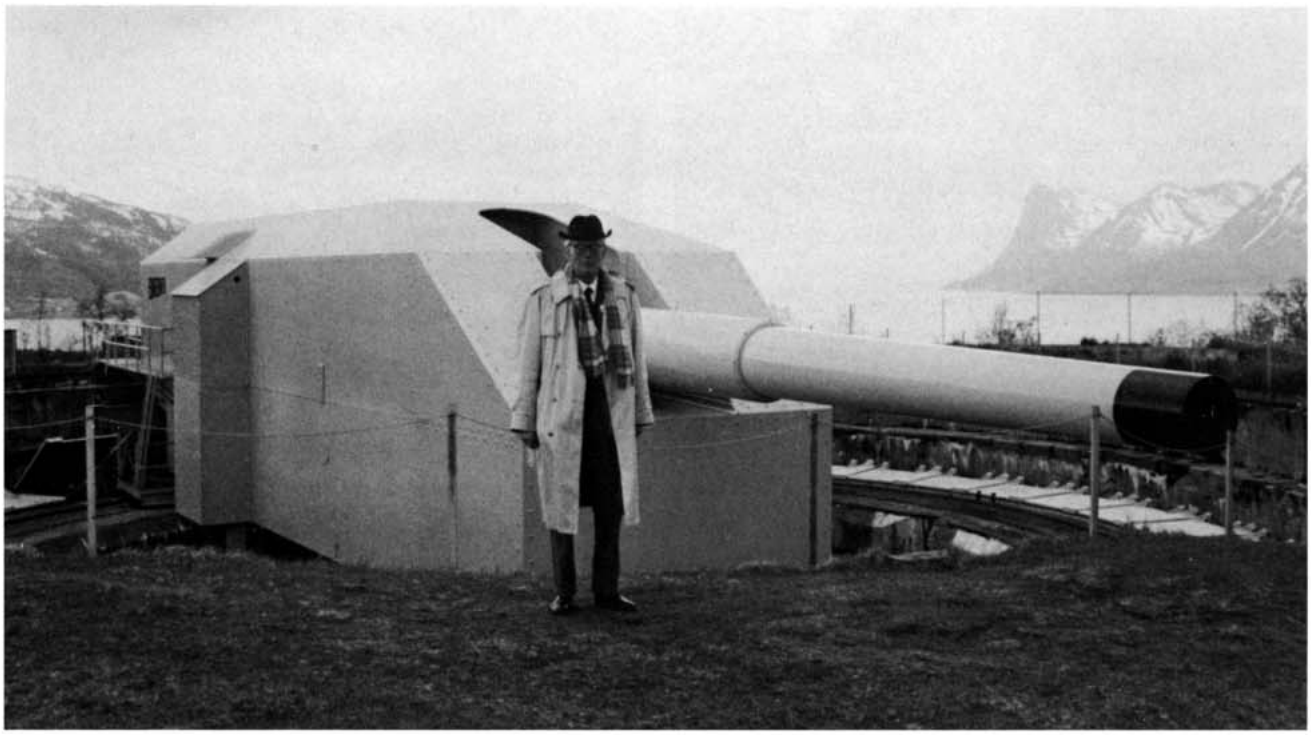
Some 1,849 British killed (1,738 known, 111 unknown) are buried in the Salerno War Cemetery which is located on the north side of Highway 18, about halfway between Salerno and Battipaglia. British losses in the beach-head battle were 725 killed, 2,734 wounded, and 1,800 missing, a total of 5,259.

Immediately after the battle, the American soldiers killed in the Salerno operation were concentrated in the Paestum US Military Cemetery, laid out in a field about a mile east of Paestum, at the foot of Mount Soprano (rising to the right). American losses in the beach-head battle (September 9-18) totalled about 3,500: 500 killed, 1,800 wounded and 1,200 missing. (USNA)

I drove on back to my headquarters in a less happy mood than I had expected to be in on the day we entered Naples. We had come along a rough road to get there from Salerno, and we had paid a heavy price for the short progress we had made into the soft underbelly of the Axis — a price that was only partly discounted by the knowledge that the enemy had paid even more dearly. In my mind, I could see the familiar map of Italy stretching northward to the Volturno river, and on through the mountainous masses to Rome. It was a rough road all the way.

Rain drifting against the windscreen of the Jeep didn't make the picture I had in my mind any more pleasant. It would be a muddy road, too.

Right: **Now, all the dead have been transferred to the permanent American cemeteries at Nettuno/Anzio and Florence or repatriated back to the United States, and nothing remains to remind a passer-by that this was once the first American cemetery on the Italian mainland.**



THE TRONDENES BATTERY AT HARSTAD

By Major T. G. W. Potts

North of the Arctic Circle, where the sun never sets during the short summer and there is still snow on the ground in June, lie the most exciting remains of Hitler's World War II coastal defences. This is the four 16-inch (40.6 cms) SKC/34 naval gun battery at Trondenes near the little port of Harstad, which is on an island off the coast of northern Norway. These are probably the biggest shore-based guns in the world and certainly the largest surviving guns in Europe.

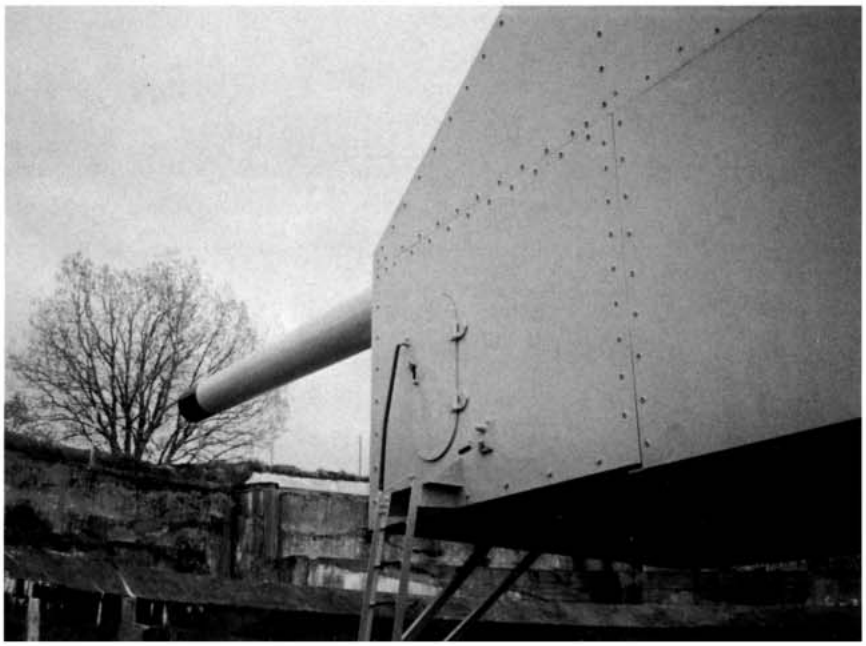
Listen. Standing on the turret deck plate you can hear the German sailors racing to their action stations. A target has been reported 30 miles away. The giant breech is open. The first of the one-ton shells is on its trolley ready to be rammed home by the great hydraulically operated rammer. The propellant charge weighing over a quarter of a ton is on another trolley, with its short brass cartridge case behind, ready to be loaded. Another shell is being raised from the magazine below on the powered ammunition hoist. A further propellant charge and cartridge case is being brought up on the other hoist. Perhaps that noise below is of further shells being pushed on shell bogies to the bottom of the hoists. Orders are being shouted. This is the big moment.

And then you wake up. You have been caught in a time warp lasting over half a century. The sailors have long gone home but at first sight the interior of the gun turret looks as good as new. The gun on its mounting with the turret on top weighs hundreds of tons, yet, mounted on a single ball race, it is still turned and elevated using the local civilian electricity supply!

Below ground level is a single handle. If taken off the wall and inserted in the nearby socket it is said that the whole of the giant gun and turret can be turned, through a series of gears, by one man. This gun (unlike its nearest British equivalents which had interrupted screw breech mechanisms) has a horizontal sliding breech-block. This weighs four tons yet it can still be opened and closed by a woman using one hand. After half a century, it still moves with the precision of a fine watch.

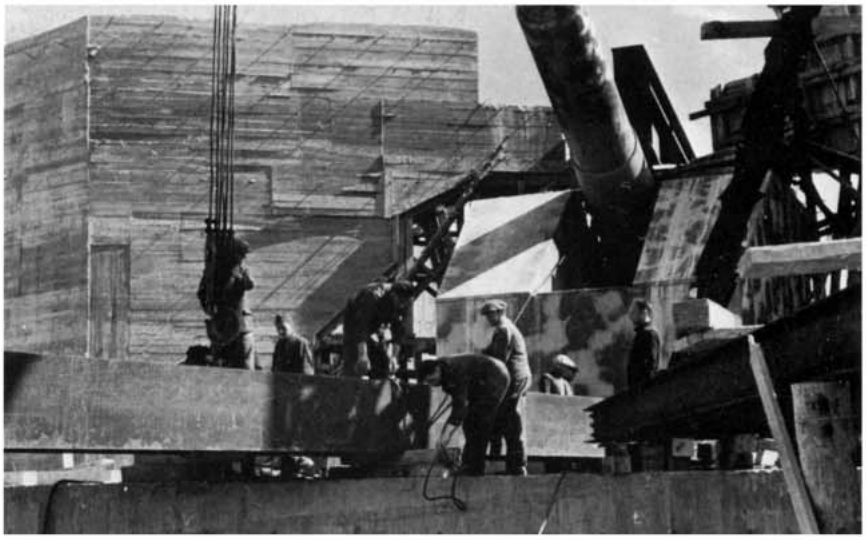
With the horizontal breech-block system, the sealing of the propellant gases to the rear was effected by a brass cartridge case which expanded as the gun was fired. Behind it lay the closed breech-block. After firing, the breech was opened by hand and the two extractors, which were part of the breech mechanism, then withdrew the cartridge case and threw it to the rear. The British never used this system for guns of this size. They used interrupted screw breeches with obturation pads to seal the gases from escaping to the rear.

The four guns in this battery are remarkable pieces of engineering. The high standard of ongoing maintenance is due to a group of Norwegian ex-servicemen who voluntarily devote their spare time and energy to maintaining the equipment.



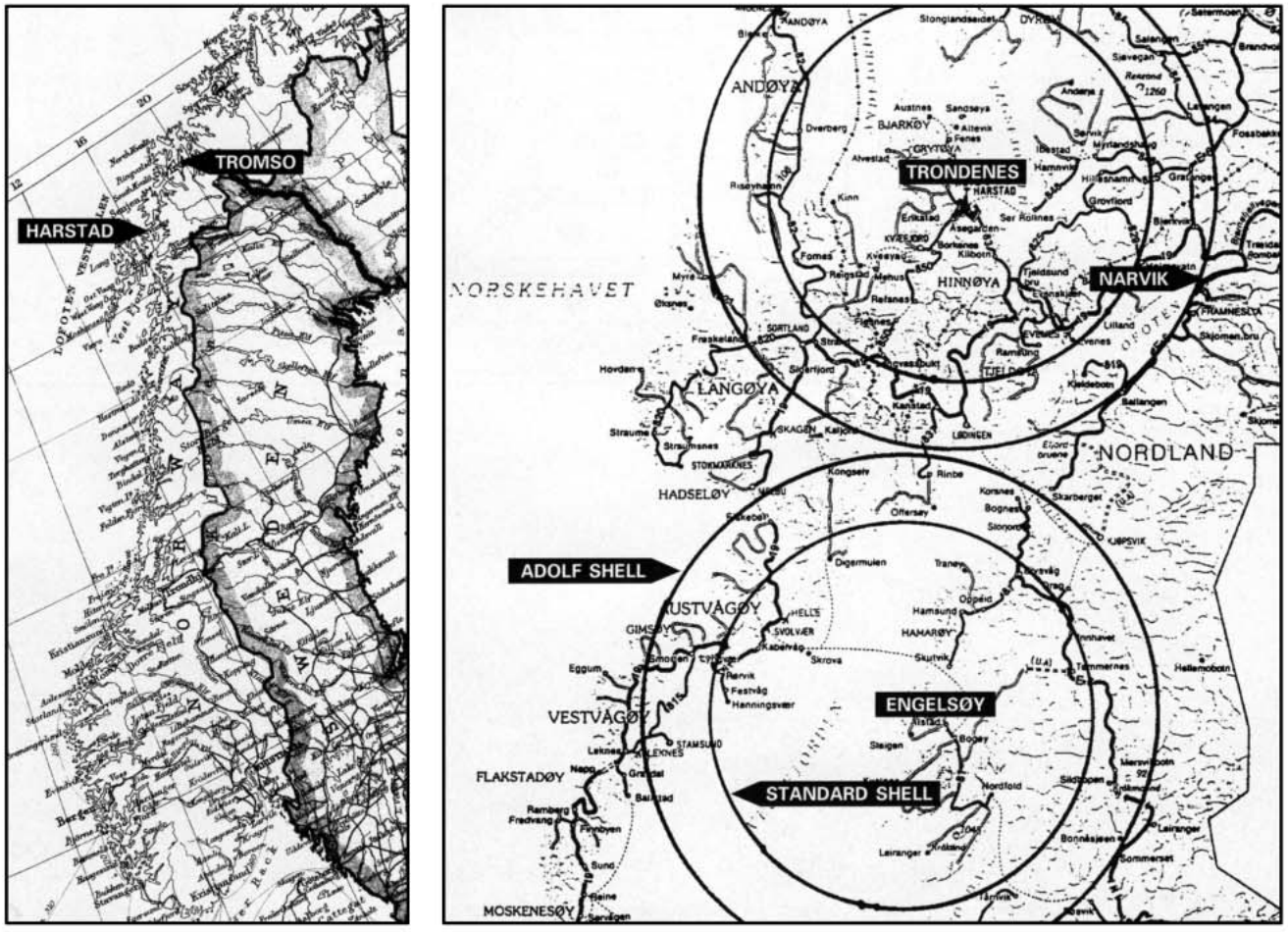
Surely the most impressive legacy of the German occupation of Europe still to be seen intact and in working order — the 40.6cm heavy gun battery at Trondenes in northern Norway. Our author, Major Tom Potts, former field branch officer in the Royal Artillery, served from 1944-62 although the largest guns he encountered were 8-inch howitzers in Korea. To visit the battery on the island of Hinnøya, one can fly to Oslo or Bergen and then catch another flight to Evenes. From there, it is a 40-minute bus ride to Harstad, the nearest large town.

Before the abandonment of Operation 'Seelöwe' — the invasion of Britain — in 1940, the Germans turned their attention to defending the 2,000-mile coastline they held from the Arctic Circle to the Spanish frontier. Although there was a shortage of large-calibre coastal defence guns, a number of 40.6cm naval gun barrels had been manufactured by Krupps, and when the German capital ship programme was cancelled in October 1939, these SKC/34 barrels were mated to proof mountings modified for installation in coastal defence emplacements. *Right:* The first three Bettungsschiessgerüst C/39 mountings were sent to France to form Batterie Lindemann at Sangatte to cover the narrowest part of the English Channel (see *After the Battle* No. 29). The standard 40.6cm shell weighed 1030kg (2,300lbs) and had a muzzle velocity of 810 m/sec (2,657 ft/sec) giving a flight time of 102 seconds to its maximum range of 42.8 km (26 miles). (Bundesarchiv)

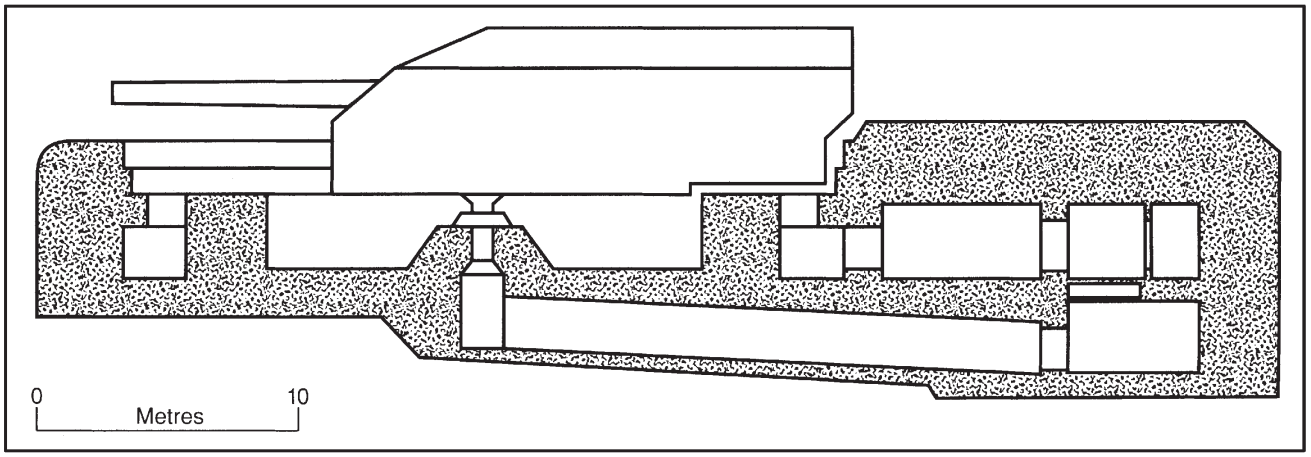


After the fall of Norway in the first half of 1940, the Germans commenced the construction of an immense series of coastal gun emplacements running throughout the length of the country. They continued improving these defences until 1945 by which time it has been estimated that they had in position 280 batteries comprising over 1,100 guns. Northern Norway in the Narvik area was particularly heavily defended because the Gulf Stream makes it an ice-free port and, for that reason, it was very important to the Germans. They relied heavily on iron ore mined in northern Sweden for their war industries. In the winter, the sea in the Gulf of Bothnia off the north Swedish coast freezes making the transport of iron ore through the Baltic to Germany difficult if not impossible. The Germans then relied on the railway from Sweden to Narvik on the Arctic coast where the ore could be loaded on to freighters for the journey down the Norwegian Leads to Germany. (The Leads is the strip of sea between the mainland of Norway and the chain of islands which runs parallel to the coast a few miles out.) There was no railway running south from Narvik. There were other batteries in the Narvik area, including one at Engelsøy on the island of Steigen with three more 40.6 cm guns.

It is 600 miles as the crow flies from Oslo to Harstad but for the enthusiast the trip is well worthwhile. The guns at Austråt, taken from the battleship *Gneisenau* (see *After the Battle* No. 44), are comparatively small compared with these. Their nearest equivalent were the guns at Engelsøy and Sangatte on the Channel coast (see *After the Battle* No. 29) but these have been scrapped.



Seven more 40.6cm guns were sent to Norway to protect Narvik – a vital port for the shipment of iron ore from Sweden on which the whole German munitions industry depended. Three barrels were mounted in Batterie Dietl at Engelsøy, 100 km to the south-west, with the other four emplaced 50 km north-west of Narvik at Trondenes. The circles show the ranges, the lighter 'Adolf' shell, weighing 600kg (1,322lbs) having a muzzle velocity of 1050 m/sec (3,449 ft/sec) and a range of 56 km (34 miles) with a flight time of 130 seconds. Of the three 40.6cm batteries, only that at Trondenes survives intact today.

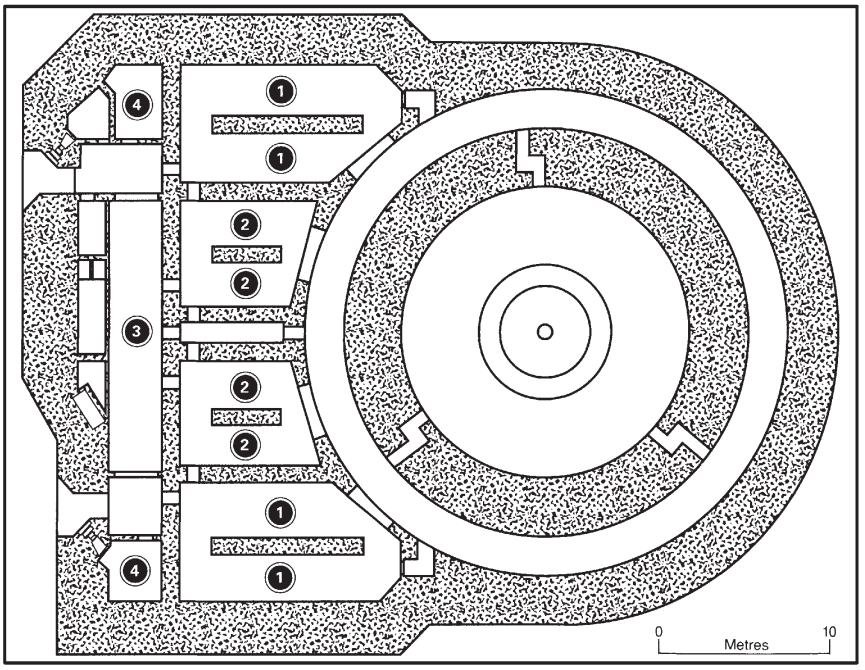


These guns were among those due to be installed in one of Hitler's six 50,000-ton 'H' Class battleships to be built under his 'Z' plan but the order for their construction was cancelled. The lighter shell called 'Adolf' was not an allusion to Hitler but represented the phonetic letter 'A' which was part of the full gun nomenclature.

The Trondenes guns are amongst the most modern of their category ever produced in Europe. Britain made no World War II guns of this calibre and even the last British battleship, HMS *Vanguard*, was equipped with 15-inch guns manufactured in the First World War.

If these 40.6 cm guns had been installed on one of the projected 'H' Class battleships they would have been mounted in twin turrets, each with an identical pair of guns, except that the left-hand gun would probably have had a breech block sliding to the left on opening and the right-hand gun a breech-block opening to the right. The reason for the lower rate of fire at high angles of elevation is that after the firing of each round, it was necessary to level the barrel in order to ram home the next shell and propellant charge. (Yes, the Germans did ram the charge although the rammer did not push it as far as the shell had been pushed!) The barrel alone weighs 156 tons. Truly heavy engineering. Recoil is taken up by two buffer recuperator systems, one above and one below the barrel. These were each charged with oil and compressed air. The recorded pressure on firing varied between 580 tons and 635 tons depending on

Unlike the Lindemann guns which were given reinforced-concrete casemates to protect the firing mechanism, the Trondenes guns relied solely on their armoured turrets for protection. This allowed the guns to traverse a full 360 degrees. [1] Shell storage. [2] Cartridge magazine. [3] Crew accommodation. [4] Air conditioning.



Of the four guns, so far only No. 1 Gun has been opened to public view. If one follows naval nomenclature, this would normally be referred to as the 'A' turret (the Germans would have referred to it phonetically as either Anton or Adolf), although they called it Barbara after the patron saint of gunners. It remains to be seen in beautiful condition.

Situated above the Arctic Circle, the conditions under which the battery had to be constructed were very severe and about

800 Soviet slave labourers are recorded on the nearby memorial as having lost their lives there between 1941 and 1945.

the elevation of the barrel. The length of recoil was only about 40 inches.

The life of each gun barrel was estimated at 250-300 standard shells. For training purposes, a liner could be inserted inside the barrel to enable sub-calibre practice shooting to take place with shells of 12.7 cm (6-inch) calibre. These rounds would have weighed about 120 pounds each.

The turret, gun, ready-use ammunition, rammer and ancillary equipment all revolved together on a single ball-bearing pivot. Unlike the great majority of the Channel coast guns, these pieces had a theoretical arc of fire of 360°. As the turret revolved, a set of heavy metal plates installed around the circumference of the gun pit rose automatically in sequence to give access to the ammunition supply beneath. After the turret had passed the plates closed again behind it thereby preserving the flash-proof arrangement.

There were two diesel-driven electricity generators in the underground bunkers beneath the gun. Either one could power the gun and ancillary equipment. (The smaller one was the reserve generator.) Another reserve source of power was the local electricity supply from the mains. This is still connected. There are still in position in the underground bunkers 11 oil tanks, each designed to hold 1000 litres of oil to work the generators. The gun had its own electrically-operated compressor to supply compressed air for the buffer recuperator mechanism.

The rammer was driven hydraulically. The hydraulic pump is still in position in the rear of the turret. In an emergency, the gunners could ram by hand; the rammer is still there and it had to be manned by a dozen men.

The Germans were nothing if not thorough. As well as access to the public water supply, there was a separate reservoir for each gun. Each gun detachment had an air-conditioned bunker below ground level in the lower quarters and there were fans to drive the air through the filters. If the electricity failed for the air-conditioning system, it could be worked manually. The underground accommodation bunkers each had a coke- or coal-fired central heating system.

About 30 men were needed to man the gun in the turret. About a further 48 worked below on ammunition handling and other supporting tasks. Each gun was self-contained, so manpower figures have therefore to be multiplied by four. There was also the command post staff, observation post personnel, signals personnel and catering staff.

Had the guns been mounted on a battleship as was originally intended, fire would have been directed from a Director high above the battleship's guns where the gunnery officer would have had a 360° view. With a coast defence battery, the position was less favourable. The battery is on a peninsula with guns sited on a frontage of about 600 yards and a primary arc of fire towards the north-west. There are islands all around restricting some of the view.

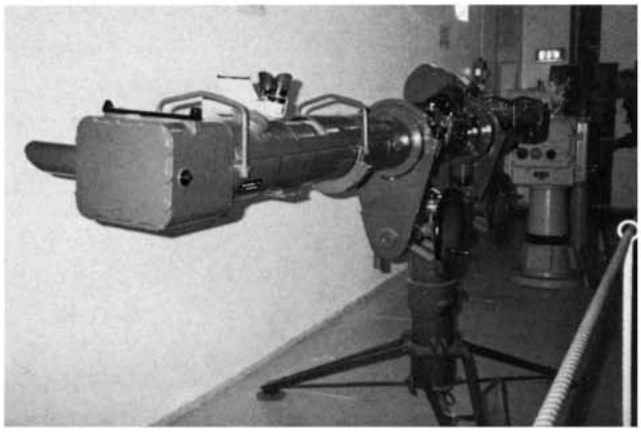
There were two methods of directing fire on hostile warships, either using a long based system with up to eight observation posts, connected by line and radio to a direction-finding station, or from the command post about 150 yards north of No. 1 gun.

The complex firing calculations were worked out in the command post. The firing data was then transmitted electrically to each gun. Those in the gun turret could see nothing of the world outside. Guns were fired electrically. Each of the four gun positions contained generally the same set of equipment. The battery represented an investment of millions of marks.

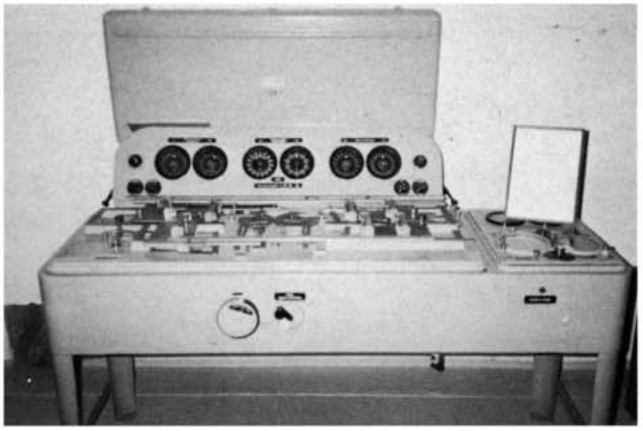
Unfortunately, the command post is not available for public inspection as it is still in use by the Norwegian armed forces. One can see, however, on display in the lower quarters, buried in the ground beneath No. 1 gun, optical instruments in one room and instruments from the command post in another room. It was in the lower quarters where the gun crew lived, where the ammunition was stored in magazines and from where the gun was powered, supplied and serviced. Those manning the guns would have slept in hammocks slung from the concrete walls in the lower quarters.

The most striking thing about the equipment on display is that it is in such a good state of preservation and maintenance. There is a direction finder; periscope; range finder; ballistic correction board which is a kind of mechanical computer into which is fed elevation, strength of wind, direction of moving target and charge temperature; range difference measurer; spotting board; range clock; fire control box; mechanical plotting board; air humidity gauge; windspeed gauge; clinometer; barometer; survey equipment; encoding machine and a teleprinter.

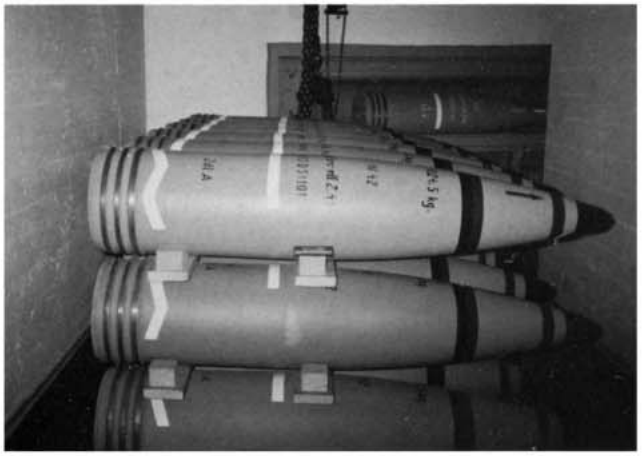
Among the more homely equipment displayed is water purification equipment, a boot repairers' kit, and an aircraft recognition slide projector. There is also a British spies' suitcase radio; one wonders what story that could tell.



Eight observation posts were constructed to work with the battery: at Grøtavær, Aspenes, Engenes, Bremnes, Sandsøy, Tjøtta, Skrolsvik, and Elgsnes. *Left:* **Range-finders, like this one**

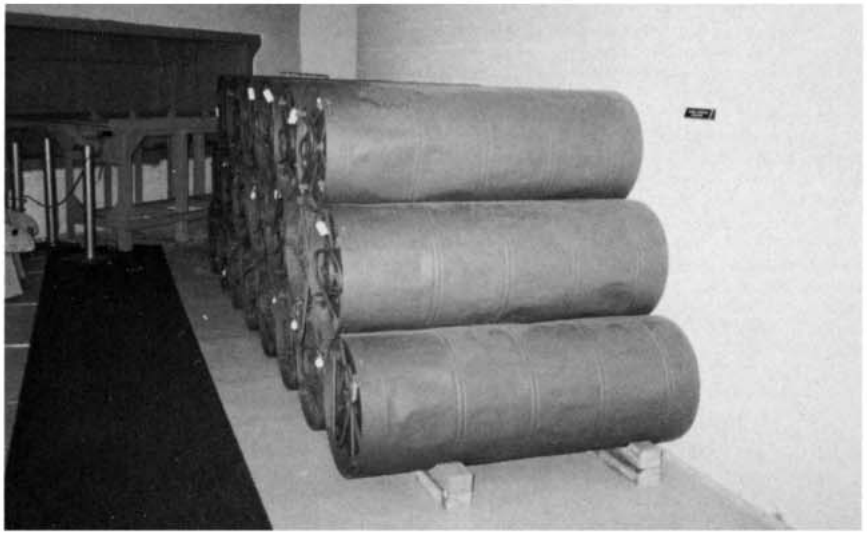


displayed at Trondenes, were accurate out to 100,000 metres — well beyond the line of sight. *Right:* **The mechanical computer from the Command Post has also been preserved.**



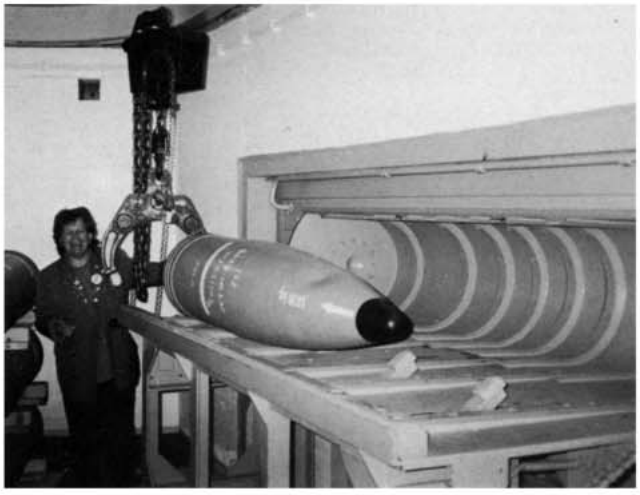
Impressive stacks of both the standard shell (*left* painted yellow) and the longer-range 'Adolf' (blue *right*), each marked with its own particular weight, remain in the magazine, each type differing in length and explosive content.

From the ammunition handling point of view, the problem was to transport very heavy shells, propellant charges and cartridge cases from a fixed ammunition magazine, or magazines many feet below ground level, up to a revolving gun on the surface. It was vital to eliminate any risk of an accidental flash from the turret travelling down to the magazine beneath and igniting the contents. The propellant charges were stored in cannisters which would have had to be removed during the loading sequence. In the magazine there were separate storage areas for different types of shell. As required, shells were hoisted by block and tackle on to an overhead traveller on a monorail railway line and then pushed manually through the ammunition handling area to a flash-proof door in the reinforced concrete wall separating it from the area immediately beneath the gun turret. When the door was operated manually, it swung the shell to the other side of the wall onto one of four shell bogies which travelled on a circular railway line which ran round the perimeter of the underground excavation beneath the pit in which the gun was mounted. Shells were then pushed manually as required to the powered hoist which lifted them up to the turret above. The propellant charges and cartridges followed the same route from the magazines but had their own part of the hoist. Empty cartridge cases were ejected after firing from a hole in the turret into the gun pit in which the turret revolved.

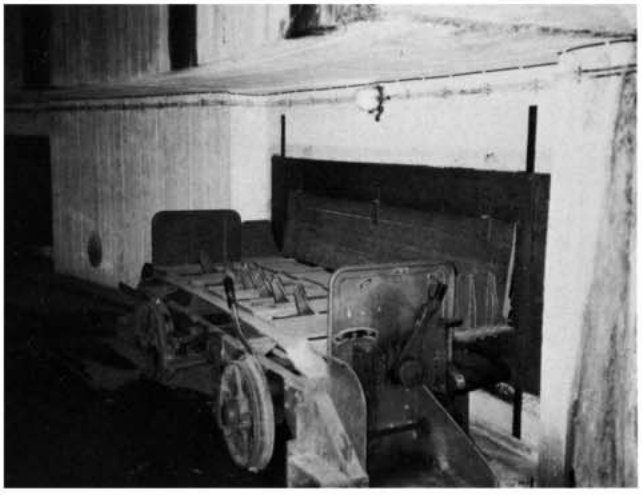


Several powder charges are still to be seen in the magazine in their flash-proof containers.

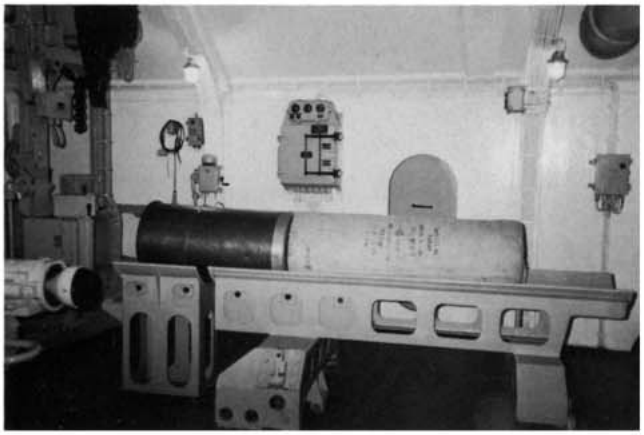
It is believed that the battery never fired in anger. It would, however, have acted as a potent deterrent to Allied warships over a radius of about 35 miles. When the Norwegians took over control of Harstad after the war, they found there was sufficient ammunition at Trondenes to fight a major engagement: 831 high-explosive rounds; 316 armour-piercing shells and 80 'Adolfs'. Some of that ammunition is preserved today. Each shell has three copper driving bands and looks as good as new.



Sigrid Hansen, the battery guide from Harstad Tourist Office, demonstrates the shell hoist inside the ammunition handling area. The overhead traveller for transporting the shells has just unloaded one next to the flash-tight door on the right. The shell is one of the lighter 'Adolf' shells.



On the other side of the flash-tight door is the area beneath the turret on its mounting. One of the four manually-operated shell bogies can be seen. It travels round a circumferential railway line to feed the ammunition hoists (one for shells and one for cartridges) which take the shells up to the turret.



In the turret there is a propellant charge with the cartridge which also contains propellant behind it. The total weight of propellant used exceeded that on any Royal Navy battleship gun in World War II.

Hitler's battery did have a couple of Achilles' heels. Unlike most of its counterparts on the Channel coast, the guns were not protected by overhead reinforced-concrete casemates. The Germans probably thought that the risk of air attack so far north was less and also that a reduction in the firing arc was unacceptable in that area. Secondly, it seems that the battery had no radar although a type Fu Mo 214 (SEEART) was under construction at the end of the war.

There is, however, a darker side to the story. A Russian memorial commemorates 800 prisoners who died installing the battery, and inside the door of the nearby church at Trondenes is a list of 25 Norwegians who also lost their lives. Carl Johan Meier Johansen, then a local shopkeeper and now 81 years of age, remembers the day when the Germans first arrived in April 1940. Although in business, Mr Johansen's main interest was music and he played in a restaurant band. He recalls that three Germans arrived unannounced and spoke to the manager. Although they had come off a civilian ship, they wore naval officers' uniforms. They tried to be friendly and asked if he would like a drink! They appeared 'nice people'. They were part of Hitler's campaign to try and win the hearts and minds of the Norwegian people and to take over their land without a fight.

The first prisoners to arrive were political prisoners. They were housed in a camp at the base of the peninsula near the church and were soon put to work. The Germans established their own camp nearby. In 1942, Russian prisoners started to arrive. They were housed in the same general area. They were grossly ill-treated. In the presence of the Norwegians, prisoners marching in the town were 'beaten until they could not walk'. The Germans were equally rigid with their own people. A senior officer who failed to stop at a road-block 100 yards from Mr Johansen's shop in broad daylight was shot by the sentry. The local Gestapo headquarters was in the basement of the Kaffistua. Germans on a motorbike and sidecar would drive round selecting suspects for questioning. The Russians were treated worst of all. Mr Johansen believes that most of the Russians who died were shot.

By 1944, German attitudes were changing. Servicemen would come to the shop to buy food to send home. Some wanted to go home and admitted it. They became less arrogant and in 1945 they left without any trouble.

After the war, Narvik was seen as vulnerable to Russian attack so the Norwegians decided to incorporate the battery as part of their coast defences. Initially, they experienced difficulties because the Germans had removed the guns' turret handbooks, but a 1940 range table was found and subsequently other manuals came to light. On July 3, 1957, three test rounds were fired from each gun at a range of 29,900 metres (32,800 yards). Everything worked perfectly although, prudently, the first round was fired by lanyard from outside the turret! Further firings took place up until 1961 when the battery was taken out of service.

In 1978-82, the Norwegian government spent the equivalent of about £40,000 in restoration work. All the guns are now properly painted and there is a regular sequence of repainting inside No. 1 gun position. Tourists appreciate the effort expended.

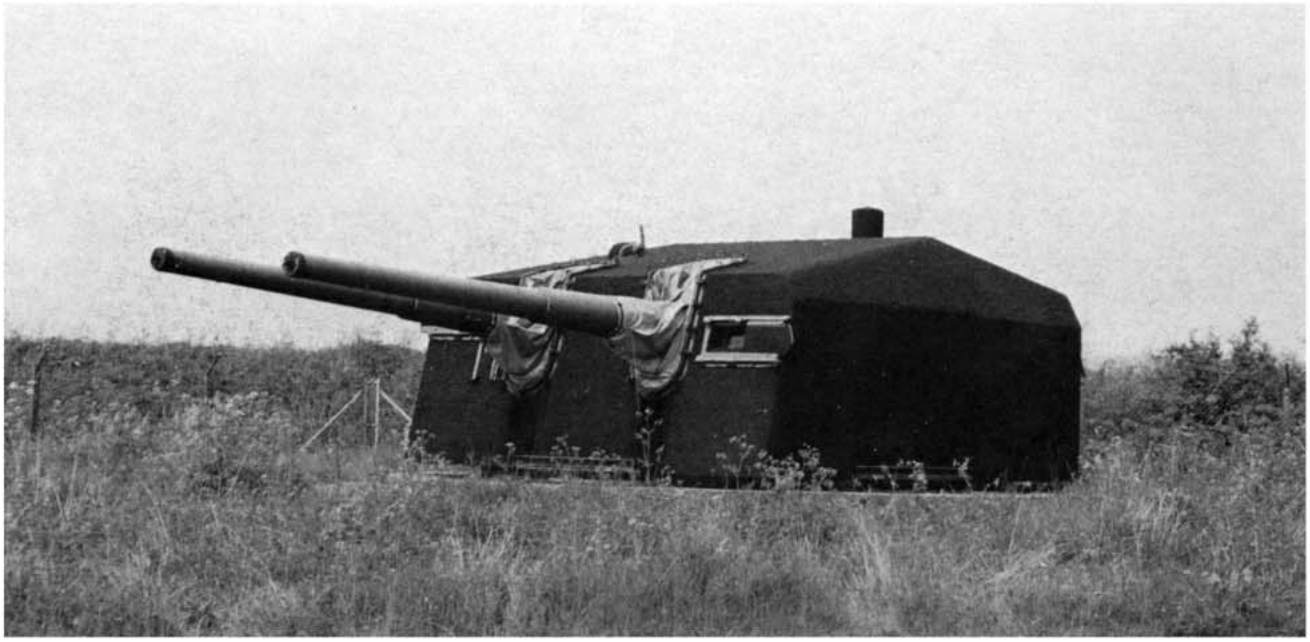
The Trondenes battery is about three miles from Harstad. There is some public transport which runs near the battery from the town square and bus staff generally speak some English. Readers visiting the battery are strongly advised to telephone the local tourist office in advance. (The number inside Norway is 77018989; Fax 77018980.) Even during the winter months, the staff man the office but only in the mornings. During the summer the office is also open on Saturdays and Sundays. They are English-speaking and are most helpful. The battery lies within an active Norwegian military base with a guard on the gate. The individual guns are locked up, hence, the assistance of the Harstad Tourist Office, which holds the key, is essential.

For British visitors, Norway is expensive. However, there are travel concessions for persons over 67 and those qualified should ask for these. Many Norwegians speak English and are very helpful to British people.

Not long ago one of the guides was taking a party of tourists round the battery, which is one of the local tourist attractions. 'Fire of the battery was directed by eight OPs', she said. 'Six', said a gentleman at the back. 'Eight', repeated the guide. 'Six', said the man, 'I was here.'

The writer wishes to acknowledge the invaluable help of Miss Sigrid Hansen of the Harstad Tourist Office in preparing this article. He also wishes to thank Mr Carl Johan Meier Johansen, Miss Merethe Johansen for translating her grandfather's reminiscences and Mrs Cathryn Corns, Mr Richard Partridge and Chris Butcher for help with the photographs.

Sigrid Hansen — 'Miss 40.6cm' as she likes to be known (see rear cover) — wanted us to introduce 'the true enthusiasts, the six people who work on the gun every Thursday all year round. They do all kinds of maintenance work, without which, we wouldn't have had such a marvellous tourist attraction. L-R: Alfred Knutsen, 64; Alf Vangen, 70; Ivar Sørensen, 62; Håkon Sundby, 80; Rolf Rydeng, 65; Leif Andersen, 68; and far right Leif Lorentzen, 64, who is in charge of the battery. He was the only survivor of an accidental explosion that took place on September 1, 1958. At that time, there was a barracks not far away from the gun where a lot of grenades had been brought to be disarmed. Six men were working on them when one exploded and there was a chain reaction. There is a small memorial stone to the five men who were killed,' explains Miss 40.6cm, 'just beside the parking lot.'



THE *GNEISENAU* FIRES AGAIN

By Peter Schenk

It is hardly known that apart from one of the 28cm triple turrets of the German battleship *Gneisenau* which survived as a coastal battery at Austråt near Trondheim in Norway (see *After the Battle* No. 44), two 15cm twin turrets from the ship are still active in the coastal battery at Stevensfort, south of Copenhagen in Denmark.

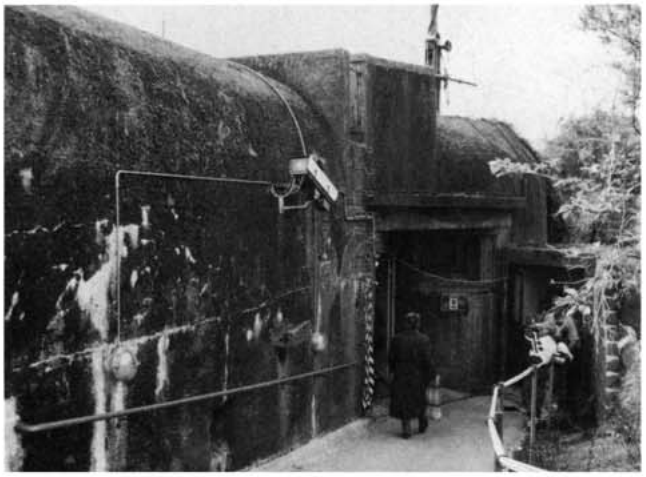
The history behind these guns is quite remarkable. Four similar turrets were installed in the *Gneisenau*, the sister ship of the *Scharnhorst*, which was commissioned on May 21, 1938. Both ships fought many actions together, the first on November 23, 1939, sinking the British armed merchant cruiser *Rawalpindi*. After a short engagement with the British battle-cruiser *Renown* on April 9, 1940, the two German battleships were successful in sinking the British aircraft carrier *Glorious* and the destroyers *Acasta* and *Ardent* on June 8, 1940. During an Atlantic operation in February and March 1941, 13 merchant ships were sunk and one captured. After her return to Kiel via the Channel, *Gneisenau* was hit by a bomb on February 26, 1942. A projected repair was abandoned and instead the armament was removed for use in coastal forts.

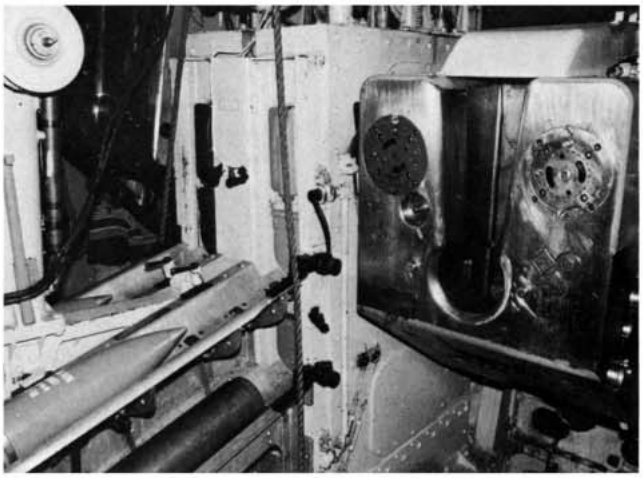
Special bunkers were designed for the four 15cm twin turrets. A two-storey Type M219 bunker was built for two of the turrets at battery Zanddijk, south of Den Helder, in the Netherlands. The remaining two were installed in single-storey Type M184 bunkers on Fanoe Island, near Esbjerg in Denmark. However, whereas the Dutch scrapped their turrets after the war, Denmark decided to move them to guard the Baltic exits as part of the Nato defences. The choice fell on Stevns Klint, a limestone cliff at Oeresund. The type of rock allowed a large underground tunnel system to be excavated for ammunition supply, the accommodation of the crew and for the artillery plotting room. The fort was commissioned on June 2, 1953. In 1958, a 12.7cm, also of German origin, was added to fire flares, together with two batteries of 4cm AA guns. On April 1, 1984, a Hawk rocket battery, Raketeskadrille 541, was moved to Stevensfort. The Gneisenau battery was opened to the public for the first time on June 2, 1996.

An interesting sequel to the German battleship-gun coastal batteries in Norway — both the Trondenes one described on the previous pages and the one at Austråt (with guns taken from the battleship *Gneisenau*) described in issue No. 44 — came when we received a letter from our Berlin contributor, Peter Schenk. As it happened, shortly after Major Potts had made his way to the Arctic Circle to visit the Trondenes battery, Peter travelled to Denmark to be present at an open day at Stevensfort where today another pair of former *Gneisenau* gun turrets survive, this time in the service of the Danish Army and still fully operational. In fact, the open day — Sunday, June 2, 1996 — was planned to coincide with an exercise shooting of the battery's 15cm guns.

Below: **The Germans, when they first removed these turrets from the *Gneisenau* in 1942, placed them on Fanoe Island on Denmark's western shores but, after the war, the Danish Army decided it had better use for them facing east and moved them to Stevns Klint, 30 miles south of Copenhagen on Sjælland Island.**

The two operational twin-gun towers, No. 1 *(opposite top)* **and No. 2, contain 15cm Type L55/M30 guns in M28 turrets.** *Above:* **There is also a single 12.7cm L/45M/34 gun, also of wartime vintage and built by the Germans, which the Danes used for firing flares, but this is now no longer in use.**





Above: **The entrance bunker to the battery's tunnel system.** *Above right:* **The interior of Turret No. 1 with breeches, ammunition, hoist and optic.**

Below: **Fire! This is No. 2 gun firing and** *(opposite)* **the impact of the shell as it hits the sea after 13 seconds — surely an experience worth the trip!**